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5,000 booked, 5 arrested in Haldwani over clashes

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JSW group signs MoU to set up ₹40K cr EV projects

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SPORTS

Haland double sinks Everton to send City top

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PHOTO: PTI

U-19 Final: India gears up for World Cup win against Aus

BENONI, 10 FEB

Few careers will get wings to soar while some will fade into oblivion but on Sunday, all those sprightly 18 and 19-year-old Indian boys will leave no stone unturned to win a record sixth ICC U-19 World Cup when they face Australia in the summit clash here. On 19 November last year, an Australian team left Rohit Sharma and his band teary-eyed on a global stage and for the Uday Saharans, Sachin Dhas, Musheer Khans and Saumykumar Pandeys, beating an Aussie team would certainly be very sweet. "No, we are not thinking about revenge. We are firmly focussed on present and we neither want to dwell on past or look too far ahead," skipper Saharan recently told PTI Bhasha in Benoni. The Aussies have a quartet which could spell trouble for India and they are skipper Hugh Weibgen, opener Harry Dixon, seamers Tom Straker and Callum Vidler, the consistent performers during this edition.

—PTI

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'Dismiss M'rashtra govt and impose President's rule'

MUMBAI, 10 FEB

Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday stepped up his attack on the Maharashtra government over the law and order situation in the state by demanding the dismissal of the Eknath Shinde-led dispensation and imposition of the President's rule.He made the demands in the wake of the murder of his party leader Abhishek Ghosalkar ,40, at Dahisar in Mumbai two days back.Addressing a press conference here, Thackeray said, "We demand the dismissal of the Maharashtra government. We also demand that President's rule be imposed in the state and fresh polls be conducted."The former chief minister also accused the state government of protecting mobsters."If police are given a free hand, they can put all mobsters behind bars in 24 hours, but the mobsters enjoy support of the government," Thackeray said.He also raised questions over the manner in which Ghosalkar was killed. *—PTI*

Farmers' 'Delhi Chalo': Haryana orders internet ban

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

The Haryana government on Saturday ordered the suspension of mobile internet services and bulk SMS in seven districts ahead of farmers' proposed 'Delhi Chalo' march on 13 February. Farmers proposed 'Delhi Chalo' march on 13 February to press Centre to accept their various demands, including enactment of a law to guarantee a minimum support price (MSP) for crops. Haryana Police on Saturday issued a traffic advisory and urged commuters to limit travel on the main roads of the state to urgent situations, anticipating potential traffic disruptions on major routes from Haryana to Punjab. Police also ordered suspension of mobile internet services and bulk SMS in seven districts ahead of farmers. According to advisory, guidelines have been issued to all senior police officers. *—PTI*

WILL IMPLEMENT CAA BEFORE 2024 POLLS: SHAH

Shah says Muslims being provoked, CAA can't take away citizenship

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

The rules for implementing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) will be issued before the coming Lok Sabha polls and the process to grant Indian nationality to the beneficiaries will start soon after, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said here on Saturday.

Under the CAA, the Modi government wants to grant Indian nationality to persecuted non-Muslim migrants - Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis and Christians - from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan who had come to India till 31 December, 2014.

The Muslim community is being provoked over CAA and he assured the minority community that their citizenship will not be snatched away.

He said granting Indian citizenship to persecuted minorities of the neighbouring countries was a promise of the Congress leadership too.

Since 2020, Home Ministry has been taking extensions from parliamentary committee for framing the rules **PHOTO: PTI**

There were massive protests in some parts of the country after the CAA was passed by Parliament in December 2019 and got the presidential assent.

Delayed by over four years, rules for the CAA are a must for its implementation. Officials said rules are ready and the online portal is also in place as the entire process will be online.

The applicants will have to declare the year when they entered India without travel documents. No document will be sought from the applicants.

According to the law, the benefits under the CAA will be given to the undocumented minorities from the three countries.

The promise of implementing the controversial CAA was a major poll plank of the BJP in the last Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in West Bengal.

The saffron party's leaders consider it a plausible factor that led to the rise of the BJP in Bengal.

According to the Manual on Parliamentary Work, the rules for any legislation should have been framed within six months of presidential assent or seek an extension from the Committees on Subordinate Legislation in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

Since 2020, the home ministry has been taking extensions at regular intervals from the parliamentary committee for framing the rules. Over a hundred people lost their lives during the protests or in police action after the parliament passed CAA.

Meanwhile, in the last two years, over 30 District Magistrates and Home Secretaries of nine states have been given powers to grant Indian citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians coming from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan under the Citizenship Act, 1955. According to the annual report of the Ministry of Home Affairs for 2021-22, from 1 April, 2021, to December 31, 2021, a total of 1,414 foreigners belonging to these non-Muslim minority communities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan were given Indian citizenship by registration or naturalization under the Citizenship Act, 1955.The nine states where Indian citizenship by registration or naturalization is given under the Citizenship Act, 1955 to non-Muslim minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan are Gujarat, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Maharashtra.

—PTI

BJP will win 370 seats as it abrogated 'Art 370'

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

BJP will get 370 seats and the NDA more than 400 in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls and form the government for a third consecutive term under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said here on Saturday.

"We have abrogated Article 370 (of the Constitution, which gave a special status to the erstwhile state of Jammu and Kashmir). So we believe that the people of the country will bless the BJP," he sais

Shah asserted that there is no suspense over the outcome of the Lok Sabha polls and even the Congress and other opposition parties have realised that they will again have to sit in the Opposition benches.

Shah alsosaid the central government can't help the states which empty their treasuries after making unrealistic election promises. He said it was Modi who took gave more funds to the states through the 15th Finance Commission.

—PTI

PATTING ONE'S OWN BACK

5 years of 17th LS was of reform, perform, transform: Modi

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

The 17th Lok Sabha was adjourned sine die on Saturday bringing the curtains down on the House that witnessed several landmark decisions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi asserted that game-changing reforms during its five-year tenure laid the foundation of a strong India.

As the adjournment of Parliament for an indefinite period with the Rajya Sabha also adjourning sine die kickstarts the final countdown for the general elections, Modi said the last five years were a period of "reform, perform and transform" with the country moving towards "big changes" at a fast pace. The Lok Sabha elections are expected to take place in April and May.

As MPs bade goodbye to the 17th Lok Sabha which will be remembered for some defining moments, unprecedented security breach and record suspension of 100 MPs for unruly conduct, Modi lauded the outgoing House, saying many decisions including the repeal of Article 370 of the Constitution and the passage of Women's reservation bill were taken during its tenure for which many generations had long waited. Scrapping of Article 370, which had given special status to Jammu and Kashmir, and building of Ram temple in Ayodhya were part of BJP's core agenda for decades. Modi also said the 17th Lok Sabha saw 97 per cent productivity. The Lok Sabha also saw passage of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Bill and enactment of farm sector reforms that drew widespread year-long protests in the National Capital Region(NCR). *—PTI*

Narendra Modi speaks in the Lok Sabha during the Budget session of Parliament, in New Delhi, Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

Pak Army backs Sharif's call to form unity government

ISLAMABAD, 10 FEB

Pakistan's powerful Army Chief Gen Asim Munir on Saturday urged the country's polarised political leadership to form a "unified government of all democratic forces". He backed ex-premier Nawaz Sharif's plea to his rivals to help form a coalition government after the general elections appear to have produced a hung Parliament.

Efforts to form a unity government gained momentum after the three-time former prime minister Sharif, who seems to enjoy the backing of the Pakistan Army, on Friday appealed to other political parties to join hands to pull cash-strapped Pakistan out of its current difficulties.

Springing a surprise, independents backed by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party won the lion's share of 100 seats in the National Assembly in Thursday's election. Khan's party has already claimed victory in the elections.

The group was followed by Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) with 73 seats, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) with 54, Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) with 17 and 11 other seats going to smaller parties, as the result of 255 seats out of 265 was announced by the Election Commission of Pakistan. To form a government, a party must win 133 seats out of 265 in the National Assembly. Election to one seat was postponed after the death of a candidate. Overall, 169 seats are needed to secure a simple majority out of its total 336 seats, which include the reserved slots for women and minorities.

Votes are still being counted after the general election which was marred by allegations of rigging, sporadic violence and a countrywide mobile phone shutdown. The powerful Pakistan Army, which has ruled coup-prone Pakistan for more than half of its 75-plus years of existence, has hitherto wielded considerable power in matters of security and foreign policy. Meanwhile, Khan, 71, in an AI-generated audio-video message on Saturday claimed victory in the elections. *— AP*

Imran Khan **PHOTO: PTI**

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561 inmates on death row, highest in 2 decades: Report

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

A total of 561 prisoners are on death row in the country, the highest at the end of a calendar year in two decades -- a rise of 45.71 per cent in such inmates since 2015, a report revealed.

The eighth edition of the 'Death Penalty in India: Annual Statistics Report' published by Project 39A at National Law University, Delhi said the trial courts imposed 120 death sentences in 2023 but the year witnessed lowest rate of death sentence confirmations by the appellate courts since 2000, with the Supreme Court not confirming any death sentence for a second calendar year after 2021.

"The Supreme Court did not confirm any death sentence in 2023. In the High Courts, only one death sentence was confirmed by the Karnataka High Court in a murder simpliciter case. In doing so, 2023 marks the lowest rate of death sentence confirmations by the appellate courts since 2000," said the report.

The report said the President of India rejected one mercy petition in March 2023 in a case of kidnapping, rape and murder of a minor in 2008. There are a total of 488 death row prisoners awaiting judgment from the High Courts, it said.

It said that the top court acquitted four prisoners in three death penalty appeals, remanded two death penalty cases to the trial court and the High Court, and commuted the death sentences of three death row prisoners in criminal appeals.

—PTI

'SHOOT THE TRAITOR'

Cong files FIR against BJP's Eshwarappa

BENGALURU, 10 FEB

The row over BJP leader KS Eshwarappa's 'shoot the traitor' remark intensified on Saturday with the Siddaramaiah-led Congress government in Karnataka filing an First Information Report (FIR) against him and the saffron party leader asserting that he was not scared of such cases.

The controversy broke out on Thursday after former Minister Eshwarappa at an event in Davangere said: "I want to appeal to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to bring a law to shoot the two traitors - DK Suresh and Vinay Kulkarni, who want South India to be a separate country."

Subsequently, a case was registered by the Davangere Extension Police Station based on a complaint by Hanumanthappa, 36, a resident of the area. Reacting to the FIR against him, Eshwarappa told reporters in Shivamogga that he was not scared of such FIRs.

"I am not scared of 100 such FIRs against me on the principles related to nationalism and Hindutva," he added. The FIR was registered after Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said on Friday that legal action would be taken against the BJP leader for his statement. Siddaramaiah also wondered whether this was the language of a leader belonging to a national party.

Eshwarappa **PHOTO: PTI**

Claiming that the taxes collected from the southern states were being distributed to north India, Suresh, Congress MP and brother of Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister, D K Shivakumar, said on 1 February that the southern states would be forced to demand a separate nation if the 'injustice' was not rectified.Following Eshwarappa's remark, Suresh on Saturday dared him to shoot him down instead of waiting for others to do the job. "Why should anyone else shoot me? If you (Eshwarappa) give me time, I will stand before you for the sake of Karnataka, its land and Kannadigas," Suresh told reporters here.

He said he would soon fix a time to meet the BJP leader. "You want your leadership to appreciate you. Why going here and there in search (of killers)? I will come to your house. I will soon fix a time and meet you within a week," he said.

—PTI

>>>More on Page 2

RAM TEMPLE ISSUE TAKES CENTRE STAGE IN PARLIAMENT ON LAST DAY

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

The Ram Temple construction took centre stage on the last day of Parliament's budget session on Saturday with both Houses holding a discussion on its consecration ceremony and Prime Minister Narendra Modi saying adoption of a laudatory resolution on it will give constitutional strength to the future generations to feel proud of the country's values.

Several members in both Lok Sabha and Rajya participated in the discussion that lasted a few hours. The CPI-M staged a walk-out from Rajya Sabha.

Modi noted in Lok Sabha that the discussion on the Ram Temple was important for the next generation. In a swipe at the Opposition which has constantly targeted BJP over the temple issue, he said, "This is true that not everyone has the capacity for these things. Some people are brave to face it while others run away from the battlefield. But for the future record, the speeches that were made today have sensitivity, resolve and sympathy... It also takes forward the mantra of 'sabka saath, sabka vikas'." The Lok Sabha also passed a resolution on "the construction of historic Shri Ram Temple and Pran Pratishtha of Shri Ram Lalla" after a nearly four-hour discussion, describing its construction as a historic achievement. *—PTI*

7 TIMES MORE THAN CONG

BJP got ₹1.3K cr through electoral bonds in 2022-23

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

BJP received nearly Rs 1300 crore through electoral bonds in 2022-23, which was seven times more than what Congress got in the same period through the same route.

BJP's total contributions stood at Rs 2120 crore in 2022-23 fiscal, of which 61 per cent came from electoral bonds.

In FY 2021-22, the party's total contributions were to the tune of Rs 1775 crore. The party's total income in 2022-23 stood at Rs 2360.8 crore, up from Rs 1917 crore in FY 2021-22.

Congress, on the other hand, earned Rs 171 crore from electoral bonds which was down from Rs 236 crore in FY 2021-22.

Samajwadi Party, had earned Rs 3.2 crore through electoral bonds in 2021-22. In 2022-23, it received no contributions from these bonds.

Another state recognised party, TDP, earned Rs 34 crore through electoral bonds in 2022-23 which was up 10 times from the previous fiscal.

BJP also earned Rs 237 crore from interests in the last fiscal, up from Rs 135 crore in 2021-22.

Out of its total expenditure on 'election and general propaganda', the BJP paid Rs 78.2 crore for use of aircraft and heli copters, which is down from Rs 117.4 crore in 2021-22. *—PTI*

BJP also earned Rs 237 crore from interests in the last fiscal, up from Rs 135 crore in 2021-22 **PHOTO: PTI**

ED raids Cong MLA in money laundering case

BENGALURU, 10 FEB

Enforcement Directorate (ED) raided more than a dozen locations in Karnataka on Saturday as part of a money-laundering investigation against Congress MLA Nara Bharath Reddy and some others, official sources said.The premises of the 34-year-old legislator in Ballari and some other locations in Karnataka and Telangana were searched, they said.The money-laundering case against Reddy stems from an FIR lodged by the Karnataka Police and allegations of land deals that are under the ED's scanner. Some mining and quarrying businesses allegedly linked to the MLA are also being investigated by the agency. *—Salar News*

Farmers sell paddy in open market due to high price

MANDYA, 10 FEB

A majority of farmers cultivating paddy in Mandya district have not supplied their produce to grain procurement centres of Agriculture Department this season but instead sold them in the open market due to higher prices. Last year, around 3,068 farmers supplied paddy to the government buying centres, while this time, only 20 farmers have registered for it due to the higher price for their produce in the open markets. The Minimum Support Price (MSP) for one quintal of paddy is Rs 2,100. Last year, thick paddy was sold in the market for Rs 1,800 to 2,000, while small paddy fetched Rs 2,100 to 2,300, prompting farmers to utilise the buying centres. This year, thick paddy commands prices ranging from Rs 2,100 to Rs 2,200, and small paddy fetches Rs 2,700-3,000 in the open market, resulting in most farmers opting to sell their produce directly to brokers and traders.On the other hand, farmers are showing interest in supplying ragi to procurement centres, as the price set under the MSP (Rs 3,846) surpasses that of the open market. A total of 16,337 farmers have registered to supply 3,76,116 quintals of ragi with a significant number hailing from Mandya, Nagamangala, Pandavapur, and KR Pete taluks.MP Krishnakumar, Joint Director of the Food Department in Mandya, attributed the increased prices of paddy in the open market to drought and other factors. *—Salar News*

128 industrial projects worth Rs 6,407 cr gets nod

BENGALURU, 10 FEB

State-Level Single Window Clearance Committee (SLSWCC) has approved 128 industrial project proposals of over Rs 6,407 crore in investment. The projects were endorsed by the 143rd SLSWCC headed by Large and Medium Industries Minister MB Patil. It is expected to create employment opportunities for nearly 33,771 individuals. Among the notable proposals are those from Bengaluru-based companies Gokula Education Foundation (Medical) and Rashtreeya Sikshana Samithi Trust, with investments of Rs 484.33 crore and Rs 415 crore, respectively. Patil said: "The efficiency of the single-window system by clearing such a large number of projects in a single meeting ensures equitable investment distribution across the State. The committee also approved 22 projects valued at over Rs 50 crore, with a total investment of Rs 4,230.64 crore and the potential to create 24,846 jobs." Patil said 104 new projects ranging from Rs 15 crore to Rs 50 crore were given a green light, with an investment of Rs 2,056.68 crore and the potential to generate around 8,425 jobs. Two proposals for additional investment in existing projects will result in Rs 120.50 crore being invested in the State. It also approved proposals of Rs 200 crore in districts outside City. *—Salar News*

DK Suresh MP challenges Eshwarappa to shoot him

Shivakumar says they do not want an apology from BJP leader

BENGALURU, 10 FEB

Congress MP DK Suresh on Saturday dared former BJP minister KS Eshwarappa to shoot him down instead of waiting for others to do the job. "Why do you (Eshwarappa) want to victimise the poor people by provoking them? Give me time, I will come all by myself and stand before you. Why do you need other people? You can fulfil your dreams by shooting me and get appreciation," Suresh said.

BJP leader Eshwarappa had said on Thursday in Davangere that the Centre should formulate a law to shoot down traitors like Suresh and Congress MLA Vinay Kulkarni who want South India to be a separate nation. In response, Suresh pointed out the historical context and accused BJP of being behind the attempts to silence him. He alleged threats against him for advocating for Kannada and the people of Karnataka.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar said they do not want an apology from Eshwarappa. "DK Suresh isn't the type who is scared of threats. All dares will be handled 'appropriately'. We know how to deal with threats and we have settled many such threats in the past," Shivakumar said here.

Shivakumar said every action has a consequence. "Eshwarappa once spoke about my father in the Assembly and everyone knows what happened next. Where is Eshwarappa today?" he said.

"Chief Minister Siddaramaiah confirmed that a police case had been filed, indicating that legal measures would be pursued against Eshwarappa. The Karnataka police also issued a notice to Eshwarappa regarding his controversial statement about shooting Suresh," Shivakumar said,

Former chief minister BS Yediyurappa said any legal action against Eshwarappa should proceed through proper channels, rather than misinterpreting his statements. *—Salar News*

DK Suresh and KS Eshwarappa **PHOTO: PTI**

Cong plans for people-centric manifesto for LS polls

BENGALURU, 10 FEB

The State government will come up with a people-centric manifesto that empowers all segments of society in upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Addressing the Congress Manifesto Committee here on Saturday, Shivakumar compared the development during the Manmohan Singh government with the perceived lack of transformative schemes during the BJP's rule. He said initiatives such as food security, MGNREGA, and the Right to Education under the UPA regime benefited the society. Shivakumar said despite significant urban contributions to tax revenues, the prosperity of farmers remains indispensable. He noted Congress' commitment to empowering the economically, socially, and educationally disadvantaged. He said Congress will use schemes such as Gruha Jyoti for the betterment of the society.

—Salar News

FARMERS' MEET

Govt to amend 'anti-farmer' land reforms act

BENGALURU, 10 FEB

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the State government is to amend the anti-farmer Land Reforms Act 2020 introduced by BJP government.

Addressing a farmers' convention at Freedom Park on Prof Nanjundaswamy's 88th birth anniversary, Siddaramaiah assured serious consideration of farmers' demands, including a pro-farmer budget.

Siddaramaiah slammed the Central government for the 10-year rule of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and BJP, referring to it as "Vinaash Kaal" (destructive period) rather than "Amrut Kaal" (golden period).

He said, "During this time, farmers, workers, women, and common people have suffered greatly, with their problems significantly." Siddaramaiah said none of the promises made by Modi to the people have been fully solved. Despite pledges such as doubling farmers' income, creating 2 crore jobs annually for youth, ensuring women's safety, providing employment guarantees, and offering essential commodities at affordable rates, Siddaramaiah noted that Modi has failed to deliver on these commitments."

He accused Modi of focusing on religious and emotive issues and appeasing industrialists after winning elections. Siddaramaiah labelled the last decade of Modi's rule as "Anyaay Kaal" (period of injustice).

—Salar News

Farmers take part in a convention in Bengaluru **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

BSY: Eshwarappa's remark was twisted

BENGALURU, 10 FEB

Former chief minister and BJP stalwart BS Yediyurappa on Saturday said some people were giving a twist to former minister KS Eshwarappa's 'shoot the traitors' remark to give it a different connotation.

"People are talking about Eshwarappa's statement in a way to convey a negative meaning. Eshwarappa had only asked for a law to shoot down traitors. There is no connection between Eshwarappa's statement and the comments made against him," Yediyurappa said in Shivamogga.

An FIR has been registered and a notice has been served against the BJP leader for his remarks in Davangere. Yediyurappa said Eshwarappa is capable of facing the FIR against him.

Reacting to Eshwarappa's comment, former BJP chief minister Jagadish Shettar insisted on remaining well within the limits. "Eshwarappa has defended his statement. I have said several times in the past that nobody should cross the 'Lakshman Rekha' (the line of decency)," Shettar said in Hubballi.

Former BJP MLA MP Renukacharya backed Eshwarappa saying no one can keep mum on the partition of the country. "Eshwarappa is a staunch Hindutva supporter. He has only spoken the truth. How can he stay silent when someone talks about partition of the country?" he said.

—PTI

10,500 HAJ APPLICATIONS FROM STATE

BENGALURU, 10 FEB

The Haj Committee of India has cleared 10,500 applications under the Karnataka quota for Haj pilgrimage for 2024.

Last year, there were 8,500 applications from State for the pilgrimage, and this year, it has increased by 3,000, Executive Officer of Karnataka State Haj Committee Sarfaraz Khan told Salar News. "This year, the State Haj Committee had received 13,500 applications for pilgrimage. However, only 10,500 pilgrims will be selected, as this is the quota granted to Karnataka. In case any other state surrenders their given quota, it can be transferred to Karnataka."

Karnataka State Haj Committee will now send messages to applicants for an advance payment of Rs 80,000 and will announce the district-wise training schedule shortly, Khan said. The committee is in the process of releasing the embarkation points for pilgrims from the State, he said. It was normal to allot Bengaluru, Mangaluru, Goa and Hyderabad as embarkation points for Karnataka-based pilgrims, Khan said.

A total of 1,74,117 applications for Haj were received by the Haj Committee of India this time. Among them, 6,370 applications have been from women who are above 70 years of age. Besides, a total of 5,162 women applied for going for Haj without 'mehram' this year, the largest since a reform was introduced in 2018. *—Salar News*

BE ALL EARS

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with National Manifesto Committee member K Raju and others during a manifesto consultation programme in Bengaluru on Saturday. **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Belagavi case: CID files charge sheet

BELAGAVI, 10 FEB

Central Investigation Department (CID) has completed the investigation into the alleged assault on a woman in Belagavi district by a mob that was upset after her son escaped to safety with a girl he loved in December last year. CID Superintendent of Police, Prithvik Kumar, submitted a charge sheet spanning around 1,100 pages before a trial court here on Friday.

The incident unfolded on 11 December, 2023, when the son of the victim eloped with a woman from the same village, sparking fury among the villagers. In an act of retribution, members of the woman's family allegedly orchestrated an attack on the man's mother, subjecting her to physical assault and public humiliation.

Kakati police registered a case and arrested 13 people, including a juvenile, allegedly involved in the assault. *—Salar News*

Cubbon Park: Protest against building today

BENGALURU, 10 FEB

Cubbon Park Walkers Association (CPWA) and environmentalists will protest at 11am on Sunday against State government's proposal to construct an annex building of Karnataka High Court in Cubbon Park.

Salar News had on Saturday, 10 February, filed a story on State government's move to construct the concrete structure inside the Cubbon Park.

In addition to Sunday's protest, Heritage Beku, a pro-conservation group, has started an online petition to stop this construction and it has received almost 5,000 signatures from the public within the first day on Friday. This protest marks a resurgence of the 2019 movement, which successfully halted similar construction plans due to concerns about ecological damage.

Founder of Heritage Beku, Priya Chetty Rajagopal, told Salar News "This protest will yet again bring together the people of Bengaluru to save nature. Cubbon Park as we know is a nature's abode for all the people in Bengaluru and this construction will hinder the natural balance of the ecosystem of the park."

—Salar News

Students suspended over reels at hospitals

BENGALURU, 10 FEB

As many as 38 students at a medical college in Gadag were suspended on Saturday after a reel they made on the campus went viral on social media. The medical students were seen singing and dancing to the Kannada movie Premaloka's song 'NodammaHudugi'.

Doctor dismissed for pre-wedding photoshoot

The Gadag incident comes close on the heels of a pre-wedding photoshoot at a government-run hospital in Chitradurga district. Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao said the doctor who was performing a fake surgery for his pre-wedding photoshoot was dismissed from service. In a notice, the Health Minister said government hospitals are intended for public health care and not personal endeavours. "I cannot tolerate such indiscipline from doctors." He directed all hospital staff to remain vigilant to prevent similar incidents in the future.

A video of the shoot inside an operation theatre has gone viral on social media. The operation theatre has been non-functional since September last year, health officials said on Saturday. *—Salar News*

PROTESTS IN WAYANAD

Elephant tramples man to death

WAYANAD, 10 FEB

Protests broke out on the streets in Wayanad's Mananthavady where a 42-year-old man was trampled to death by a wild elephant on Saturday.

The residents took to the streets in protest with the body of Aji, who died at Mananthavady medical college where he was admitted following the attack that occurred at around 7.30 on Saturday. The CCTV visuals of the incident showed Aji and others were trying to escape from the wild elephant and jumping into the compound of a house. However, the jumbo destroys the compound wall and chases the man.

A section of protesters marched to the sub-collector office here where the higher officials of the district including the collector and others were holding a meeting. Some violent agitators banged the doors and grills of the sub-collector office.

The locals blocked the streets and are protesting by keeping the body of Aji in the middle of the road. Earlier, the collector, local MLA and the district police chief were also blocked on the road and prevented from visiting the hospital.

Locals alleged that the elephant crossed Kerala border from Karnataka and reached Kuruvadweep locality early in the morning but the Forest department failed to announce the same and warn the people from venturing out. Meanwhile, State Forest Minister AK Saseendran said, "A wild elephant trampled a youngster to death and it was shocking and a matter of concern. We are taking all necessary steps. But the higher officials are unable to reach the place (due to protest). The district officials are ready to discuss the matter with the locals," Saseendran said. He also informed that the Forest officials were preparing to tranquilise the elephant. "The High Court is also monitoring the situation considering the recent Thanneer Komban issue. We have to monitor the elephant and see whether it is having any health issues or any injuries," the Minister said.

The Minister also said there was a delay of at least three hours in receiving the signals from radio collar ID from the elephant. "In fact there is no centralised system to monitor the signals and coordinate. We need to form a new protocol to coordinate between various forest departments," Saseendran said. Currently, the district administration has issued prohibitory orders in multiple wards of Mananthavady.

—PTI

The jumbo destroyed the compound wall and chased the man in Wayanad's Mananthavady **PHOTO: X**

7 arrested over electrocution of girl

BENGALURU, 10 FEB

CRIME BEAT

The Varthur police have arrested seven people, including the President of Prestige Lakeside Habitat, on Saturday in connection with the death of Manya Damerla, 9, who was electrocuted in December last year after she fell into a swimming pool at the apartment complex.

They were produced in court and remanded to judicial custody.Varthur police said the child was playing near the swimming pool around 7.30 pm on 29December, 2023 when she fell into the pool. She was taken to a private hospital where doctors declared her dead.

Police identified the main accused as Debashish Sinha, 37, President of the Home Owners' Association of Prestige Lakeside Habitat, while the others who have been arrested are Safiq Rao, 44, vice-president of Prestige Property Management, electricians Santosh Maharana, 27, Gobinda Mandal, Bikas Kumar Paridha, 32, and Bhakta Charan Pradhan, besides Suresh Babu, owner of Vision India Marketing. They have been booked under section 149 (member of unlawful assembly guilty of offence) and 304 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) of the Indian Penal Code.

Police investigation revealed the apartment management and electricians knew that live electric current passed through the swimming pool. The apartment management had failed to put safety measures in place to avoid any danger. Police said when the child got into the pool she was electrocuted and breathed her last immediately. *—Salar News*

MAN ELECTROCUTED AT SPORTING EVENT IN SCHOOL, DIES

GAURIBIDANURU, 10 FEB

A man died due to electrocution in a school sports event in Chikkaballapur district on Saturday. The incident happened when the iron pipes supporting a huge pandal came in contact with live wires during the function. At least 10 people, including parents, teacher and students sustained minor injuries. The incident took place around 1.30 pm. The deceased, Raghavendra, 45, belonged to Nagenahalli in Madhugiri taluk of Tumakuru district.

As the sports meet was in progress a huge whirlwind occurred,which uprooted the pandal. The parents, in a bid to prevent the pandal from falling on the children, tried to hold the same during which many held the iron pipes which came in contact with a live wire in the vicinity. Those who were holding the iron pipes felt the shock.*—Salar News*

PHOTO: X

V Sugnana Kumari Deo, 10-time Odisha MLA, dies

BHUBANESHWAR, 10 FEB

Veteran BJD leader and 10-time Odisha MLA V Sugnana Kumari Deo died at a private hospital in Chennai on Saturday while undergoing treatment. She was 87. Deo breathed her last at about 1am after Odisha Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik and other senior party leaders met her at hospital on Friday night, they said. She belonged to royal family of Khallikote. "Saddened to know about demise of V Sugnana Kumar Deo. She was a very senior leader of BJD and she made a lot of contributions towards the party. She has left her mark in the public service by representing both Khalikote and Kabisuryanagar. She was elected to Assembly 10 times. It is an irreparable loss. May her soul rest in peace and my deepest condolence to the bereaved family", he said on X.—*PTI*

Cop on duty at min's bungalow shoots self dead

RAIPUR, 10 FEB

A constable of Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF), who was posted at a state minister's bungalow in Raipur district, allegedly committed suicide by shooting himself with his service weapon early on Saturday, police said. The incident took place shortly after 2am at the official residence of Food and Civil Supply Minister Dayaldas Baghel on station road in Ganj police station limits, a police official said. As per the preliminary information, Rohit Salame, a constable with 'E' company of CAF's 1st battalion, completed his duty at the guard room of the bungalow at 2am and shot himself with Excalibur rifle at 2.10am, he said. Salame, who hails from Balod district, had returned to duty a week ago after being on leave for 25 days, the official said. No suicide note was found at the spot, he said. —*PTI*

Received threat letter: NCP's Chhagan Bhujbal

MUMBAI, 10 FEB

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Chhagan Bhujbal has officially acknowledged the receipt of a death threat letter. "I have received a letter at my office, stating that a contract of Rs 50 lakh has been given to someone to have me killed. The letter contains details such as car numbers, phone numbers and locations of meetings. I have been receiving threats and calls for several months now. Since I am involved in politics, threats and attacks have occurred before," Bhujbal said on Saturday. "As usual, I have forwarded this letter to the police," he added. Bhujbal has opposed the reservations being given to the Marathas claiming that would mean that the numerically strong community would eat into the share of the real backward class. Earlier, Maharashtra Minister Chhagan Bhujbal received a death threat on Friday. An unknown person sent a letter to his office in Nashik informing him about a contract to kill him. —*ANI*

PM to visit UAE on 13 Feb for 1st temple opening

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will pay a two-day visit to United Arab Emirates (UAE) beginning Tuesday. He will hold wide-ranging talks with President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and inaugurate the first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi. This would be the prime minister's seventh visit to UAE since 2015, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) Modi and Al Nahyan will discuss ways to further deepen, expand and strengthen the strategic partnership between the countries and exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest, it said.—*PTI*

Article 370 to suspension of 146 MPs, 17th LS saw it all

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

The curtains came down on Saturday on 17th Lok Sabha, which was witness to landmark moments such as the abrogation of Article 370, the granting of 33 per cent reservation to women in Parliament and legislative assemblies, and inauguration of the new Parliament building.

It also saw suspension of 100 members in a span of four days for unruly conduct and a major security breach on the anniversary of 2001 Parliament terror attack.

The 13 December incident, in which two intruders jumped into Lok Sabha chamber from the public gallery and set-off smoke canisters while House was in session, led to a review and stepping up of security measures in Parliament complex.

Budget session of Parliament, last before the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, started on 31 January and ended on Saturday.

17th Lok Sabha also saw the passage of the controversial Citizenship Amendment Bill in 2019, which led to massive protests in many parts of the country. Riots in northeast Delhi following a clash between those in support and against the law claimed several lives.

17th Lok Sabha had a total of 274 sittings which lasted for 1,354 hours, 345 hours more than the scheduled time PHOTO: PTI

After the outbreak of Covid pandemic, special arrangements, including those to ensure social distancing, were made in Parliament for 2020 Monsoon session and first part of 2021 budget session for transacting essential legislative and other businesses.

"17th Lok Sabha passed 222 bills. During this period, 202 bills were introduced and 11 bills were withdrawn by government," Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla said in his valedictory remarks before adjourning Budget session of Lower House of Parliament sine die.

Birla said 17th Lok Sabha had a total of 274 sittings which lasted for 1,354 hours, 345 hours more than the scheduled time.

A total of 387 hours were lost due to disruptions in this Lok Sabha. The total work productivity of 17th Lok Sabha has been around 97 per cent which is the highest among the last five Lok Sabhas. 17th Lok Sabha also passed three bills in last year to replace colonial-era criminal justice laws and the House witnessed rare unanimity in the approval of the women's reservation bill.

It was during the 17th Lok Sabha that proceedings last year moved to the new Parliament building from the adjacent old building, which is now a heritage structure named 'Samvidhan Sadan'.

17th LS records lowest number of sittings

17th Lok Sabha that came to an end on Saturday had the lowest number of sittings among the Lok Sabhas that had a full term of five years, data compiled by think tank PRS Legislative Research showed.

The 17th Lok Sabha had 272 sittings altogether over its five year tenure from 2019-2024. —*PTI*

T'gana allots Rs 53K cr for 6 poll promises

HYDERABAD, 10 FEB

Revanth Reddy PHOTO: PTI

The Congress government in Telangana presented its maiden budget on Saturday, a vote on account and earmarked Rs 53,196 crore for the implementation of its six poll 'guarantees' with the overall outlay being Rs 2,75,891 crore.

Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka presented the budget in the Assembly and said 'the budget is to fulfill the Congress government's commitment of establishing 'Indiramma Rajyam' (welfare governance of former PM Indira Gandhi) in Telangana. Alleging that the previous BRS government left the state bankrupt, Vikramarka said the burden of unplanned loans was posing a challenge."Yet, we will stand by the people with planned developmental goals," he said.

"In this budget, we have proposed Rs 53,196 crore, for implementation of month to women and cooking gas cylinders for Rs 500 for eligible households. Soon after coming to power in December 2023, the Congress government launched the fare-free travel for women in state-run RTC buses, one of the six guarantees.

Among major allocations for 2024-25, the interim budget proposed Rs 19,746 crore for agriculture, Rs 28,024 crore for irrigation, Rs 40,080 crore for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development and Rs 11,692 crore for Municipal Administration, Rs 21,389 crore for education and Rs 11,500 crore for medical and health sector. —*PTI*

Pb AAP goes solo for LS polls, INDIA cracks

Kejri said AAP will contest all 14 LS seats in Punjab

CHANDIGARH, 10 FEB

In a major blow to Opposition INDIA bloc, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Chief Arvind Kejriwal announced on Saturday that his party will contest alone all 14 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab and Chandigarh.

Categorically signalling that there will be no alliance with Congress in the state.

While launching Ghar Ghar Ration Scheme in Punjab's Amloh, AAP chief said, "Two years back, you gave us blessings. You gave 92 out of 117 seats to us (in Assembly elections), you created history in Punjab."

Drawing attention to the party's election symbol, he said that people need to "sweep Punjab" with full force.

AAP supremo's announcement comes weeks after Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann announced that his party would contest solo in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, dealing another blow to INDIA bloc hours after Trinamool Congress Chief Mamata Banerjee announced to contest in all seats in West Bengal alone, sharing no seat with her alliance partners.

Bhagwant Mann and Arvind Kejriwal during the 'Ghar Ghar Muft Ration' rally, in Ludhiana on Saturday PHOTO: PTI

Punjab CM had said in January that there would be no alliance with Congress for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Earlier, Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) also announced to go solo in Haryana in Lok Sabha polls.

AAP leader Sushil Gupta said, "We will contest alone in all 90 assembly seats in Haryana. Regarding Lok Sabha, we have communicated our stance to national leadership of our party that we are strong and we can contest the elections in alliance and independently as well. The final decision will be taken by the party leadership."

AAP's announcement also comes close on the heels of Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar making yet another flip by deserting Mahagathbandhan alliance and joining hands with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). —*PTI*

Nath posts on Cong ideology amid BJP jump rumours

BHOPAL, 10 FEB

Former chief minister of Madhya Pradesh and veteran Congress leader Kamal Nath on Saturday posted a message on X about Congress's ideology amidst reports about him being in talks with Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

Nath wrote, "The ideology of Congress is the ideology of truth, religion and justice. There is equal place and respect in the ideology of Congress for all religions, castes, regions, languages and ideas of the country. In the 138-year history of the Congress Party, most of the time has been spent in struggle and service.

In the freedom struggle movement, there was a competition among the Congress leaders to serve the country in the struggle against dictatorship. Nation building is the only aim of Congress after independence."

The Congress leader further posted that the Congress and its ideology would counter the dictatorship and make the country the most beautiful and strong democracy in the world. —*PTI*

Jayant praises PM amid talks of BJP-RLD alliance

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

Jayant Singh PHOTO: PTI

RLD Chief Jayant Singh on Saturday showered praise on the Modi government for bestowing Bharat Ratna on his grandfather Charan Singh, saying only a government rooted in ground realities could honour a farmer leader like him.

Singh asserted in Rajya Sabha that the ideals of the former prime minister are reflected in the policies of the Modi government as well, remarks that come amidst speculation that the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD) is on the verge of breaking ties with the Opposition's INDIA bloc the Congress, leading to a heated exchange of words between the opposition and the treasury benches.

Dhankhar expressed unhappiness at the objections raised by Leader of Opposition Mallikarjun Kharge and even accused the Congress leaders of insulting Charan Singh and his legacy. "It is a historic decision taken by Prime Minister Modi. It is obvious I will be happy. The honour of giving Bharat Ratna is not only limited to Charan Singh's family. This decision will empower farmers, labourers and deprived sections of the society," Singh said, amid uproar. After the House was brought in order, Singh completed his remarks.

The RLD chief lamented that honouring a personality like Charan Singh is being seen through a political prism and is being linked to the formation of a political alliance and the winning or losing of elections. —*PTI*

Shah: BJP open to new ties, talks on with SAD

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

- When pressed further on the re-entry of SAD in NDA, he said, "Talks are going on but nothing has been finalised."

The BJP does not believe in "family planning" in politics and always welcomes new allies, Union Home Amit Shah asserted on Saturday and said that talks were on with the Shiromani Akali Dal.

Asked about the possibility of the Rashtriya Lok Dal (RLD), headed by Jayant Singh, Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) and other regional parties joining the National Democratic Alliance (NDA), the Home Minister said, "We believe in family planning (in general) but not in politics."

"We always want that our alliance grows and we always welcome new allies. Our ideology has remained the same since the days of Jan Sangh. Those who like to join us can come," he said at the ET NOW Global Business Summit 2024.

When pressed further on the re-entry of SAD in NDA, he said, "Talks are going on but nothing has been finalised."

Sukhbir Singh Badal-led SAD had pulled out of the NDA in September 2020 over the now-scrapped three farm laws. —*PTI*

ED grills J'khand's Cong MP for 11 hrs

RANCHI, 10 FEB

Dhiraj Prasad Sahu PHOTO: PTI

- ED is recording Sahu's statement in connection with his alleged links with Soren and a luxury car that was seized by the agency from the JMM executive president's residence in Delhi during a search last month, the officials said

Enforcement Directorate has been questioning the Congress' Rajya Sabha MP from Jharkhand, Dhiraj Prasad Sahu, in connection with a money laundering case linked to alleged land fraud, in which the agency recently arrested former chief minister Hemant Soren, officials said.

Sahu, 64, was seen entering the ED's regional office here at around 11 am and the grilling has been underway for more than 11 hours now.

Congress MP was in the news in December last year after the Income Tax department seized Rs 351.8 crore in cash during raids on the premises linked to Odisha-based Boudh Distillery Pvt. Ltd, promoted by his family.

ED is recording Sahu's statement in connection with his alleged links with Soren and a luxury car that was seized by the agency from the JMM executive president's residence in Delhi during a search last month, the officials said.

According to the officials, ED sleuths found the car's key in the Jharkhand government-leased property in south Delhi and took the vehicle with them after the completion of the raids there.

Sahibganj Deputy Commissioner Ramniwas Yadav and Soren's press adviser Abhishek Prasad alias Pintu also appeared before the ED on Saturday for questioning in a money laundering investigation linked to alleged illegal mining in the state, officials said.

ED sleuths had interrogated Prasad for several hours in connection with the case on Friday.

Meanwhile, another accused in the money laundering case related to former chief minister Hemant Soren, Bhanu Pratap Prasad on Saturday was taken to a piece of land at Bargain circle in Ranchi which, the ED claims, belonged to Soren.

Bhanu Pratap Prasad, a former revenue department sub-inspector of the Jharkhand government who is in ED custody in connection with the case, was taken there as part of the investigation, the officials said. —*PTI*

ED summons Khurshid's wife

LUCKNOW, 10 FEB

Enforcement Directorate has summoned Congress leader Salman Khurshid's wife Louise Khurshid for questioning in a money-laundering investigation linked to alleged misuse of government funds in distribution of artificial limbs and equipment by a trust headed by her, sources said on Saturday.

She has been asked to depose at the ED zonal office in Lucknow on 15 February for recording her statement they said. Two days back, an MP-MLA court in Uttar Pradesh's Bareilly issued an arrest warrant against Louise and an another accused in this case and fixed 16 February as the next date of hearing.

The ED case of money laundering stems from the state police's FIR of 2017. Special Public Prosecutor Achintya Dwivedi had said that during 2009-10, a programme for distribution of artificial limbs and equipment was organised by Dr Zakir Hussain Memorial Trust for Disabled Persons, run by Dr Zakir Hussain Memorial Trust of Louise Khurshid in Bhojipura area of the district. —*PTI*

NIA RAIDS OVER JEI TERROR FUNDS

JAMMU/SRINAGAR, 10 FEB

National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday conducted raids at 15 locations across Jammu and Kashmir as part of its crackdown on the proscribed Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) in a terror funding case, an official said.The raids led to the seizure of incriminating documents and digital devices connected with the activities of JeI and its related Trusts and more than Rs 20 lakh.The Jamaat-e-Islami Jammu and Kashmir was banned by the Centre for five years in February 2019. —*PTI*

Ex-Cong leader Baba Siddiqui joins Ajit Pawar-led NCP

MUMBAI, 10 FEB

- Siddiqui, the former Maharashtra minister who resigned from Congress on Thursday, said that he has moved on as he was 'not needed' in the grand old party anymore

Former Congress leader Baba Siddiqui on Saturday joined the Ajit Pawar-led Nationalist Congress Party here.

Siddiqui was welcomed by deputy chief minister Pawar and top NCP leaders, including working president Praful Patel and state president Sunil Tarkare.

Siddiqui, the former Maharashtra minister who resigned from Congress on Thursday, said that he has moved on as he was 'not needed' in the grand old party anymore.

Siddique had been associated with the grand old party for 48 years.He was an MLA for three consecutive terms in 1999, 2004 and 2009, and had also served as a minister of state for food and civil supplies, labour and FDA, (2004-08) and had also served as a municipal corporator earlier for two consecutive terms (1992-1997).

He has also served as the chairperson and senior vice president of the Mumbai Regional Congress Committee and the parliamentary board of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee.—*PTI*

JD(U) ISSUES WHIP

JD(U) MLAs miss luncheon ahead of trust vote

PATNA, 10 FEB

Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD (U) on Saturday said a whip has been issued to ensure the presence of all party MLAs inside the assembly on Monday when the newly formed NDA government will seek a trust vote.

JD (U) chief whip Shravan Kumar said those defying the whip "will lose their membership" even as he maintained that it was a "routine exercise that takes place ahead of every assembly session".

Kumar was speaking on the sidelines of a luncheon he had hosted for party legislators at his residence, where signatures were obtained from the attendees, though a few MLAs remained conspicuous by their absence.

He also rubbished rumours that the chief minister, who is also the party president, had grown upset to see very few MLAs present at the luncheon and had left the minister's residence in a huff.

Nitish Kumar PHOTO: PTI

"Political figures do meet each other despite not being on the same side. We must not try to read too much into these things. Jitan Ram Manjhi is firmly with NDA," claimed JD (U) leader.

Notably, Manjhi, who's Hindustani Awam Morcha has four MLAs, including himself, has also issued a whip in what he called an attempt to dispel "the confusion created by those chasing headlines and TRP".

Meanwhile, RJD MLA and spokesperson Akhtarul Iman Shahin, whose party helms the Mahagathbandhan, took a swipe at NDA, accusing its constituents of holding MLAs captive (bandhak banaa ke rakh diya hai).

He said, "I challenge NDA to allow its members vote on the basis of their conscience. Government will fall. —*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Murmu to visit Andaman Islands from 19 Feb

PORT BLAIR, 10 FEB

President Droupadi Murmu will arrive here on 19 February on a five-day visit to Andaman and Nicobar Islands, an official said on Saturday. This will be Murmu's first visit to the archipelago after becoming the President of India in 2022.The president will arrive here around 1pm on 19 February at INS Utkrosh in Port Blair where she will be welcomed by Lt Governor Admiral (Retd) D K Joshi, Commander-In-Chief, Andaman and Nicobar Command (CINCAN), Air Marshal Saju Balakrishnan, and senior officials.During her stay in Andaman and Nicobar Islands from 19-23 February, President will visit Cellular Jail, Swaraj Dweep and will interact with various communities, officials said.*—PTI*

Jawan killed in accidental firing at Ch'garh rly station

RAIPUR, 10 FEB

A jawan of the Railway Protection Special Force (RPSF) was killed and a passenger injured after the former's service weapon accidentally went off at the Raipur railway station in Chhattisgarh on Saturday, an official said. The incident took place around 6am when a team of the RPSF led by a sub-inspector was de-boarding Sarnath Express train after escort duty, the official here said. When constable Dinesh Chandra,30, was moving out from the S-2 coach of the train, his service weapon got accidentally discharged and a bullet hit his chest. A passenger, identified as Mohammad Danish, who was sleeping on an upper berth, also sustained injuries in his abdomen, he said. They were shifted to a private hospital, where the constable died.*—PTI*

Mithun Chakraborty hospitalised with chest pain

KOLKATA, 10 FEB

Veteran actor Mithun Chakraborty was admitted to a private hospital here on Saturday after he complained of severe chest pain, officials of the health facility where he is undergoing treatment said.The 73-year-old actor underwent an MRI and other tests are currently being conducted, he said."Chakraborty has been admitted this morning and is undergoing medical evaluation. We will be able to provide further details later," the hospital spokesperson said. The actor was brought to hospital around 10.30am. *—PTI*

Absconding man held for repeatedly raping daughter

PALGHAR, 10 FEB

Police have arrested a man, who had been on the run for the past few months after being booked for allegedly repeatedly raping his 22-year-old daughter and impregnating her in Palghar district of Maharashtra, an official said on Saturday.His daughter, whom the accused raped multiple times from 2021, died in November last year at a hospital during her tuberculosis treatment, he said."The 53-year-old accused resided in Nalasopara. He was on the run since the last several months after a case was registered against him for allegedly raping his daughter between 2021 and November 2023. He also impregnated the victim and thrashed her, which led to her miscarriage," senior inspector Pramod Badakh said."The victim was admitted to a hospital for treatment of tuberculosis. However, she died there on the same day," he said. *—PTI*

5,000 booked, 5 arrested in Haldwani over clashes

Magisterial inquiry ordered after 5 killed in clashes over madrasa

HALDWANI, 9 FEB

Authorities have arrested five people and named 19 people in three FIRs registered against 19 people and a total of 5,000 unidentified people, in the 8 February violence that broke out after an anti-encroachment drive in Haldwani's Banbhoolpura area.Five people died in the violence that erupted after the anti-encroachment drive on Thursday, following which a curfew was imposed in the area.

The three First Information Report (FIRs) were registered on Friday, and police stressed that there was no fresh violence and that the situation was under control.

State Additional Director General of Police (ADG) Law & Order AP Anshuman said,: "The situation in Haldwani is normal, curfew has been lifted. Curfew continues in Banbhoolpura.

Three FIRs have been registered and five people have been arrested...CCTV footage is being checked... Five people died and three people are seriously injured. Several police officials are injured..."Police said they have taken many people into custody and searches have begun and miscreants are being identified.Security personnel have been deployed in parts of the violence-hit area after clashes erupted on Thursday night following the anti-encroachment drive.

Yesterday, Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami visited Haldwani and said the attack on police personnel, including women officers, was highly condemnable.

The Chief Minister also inquired about the condition of the women police team and other policemen, administration, municipal corporation personnel, and journalists who were injured in the violence.

Dhami said that all the video footage and footprints of those who have broken the law and damaged government property are available.

The process of identifying all the miscreants involved in this incident and taking legal action against them is underway. To ensure peace and law and order in Banbhoolpura, the Chief Minister has instructed ADG Law and Order AP Anshuman to camp in the affected area. *—PTI*

Five people died in the violence that erupted after the anti-encroachment drive on Thursday *PHOTO: ANI*

Curfew lifted from outer areas, internet still banned

Haldwani, 10 Feb

Curfew has been lifted from the outer areas of this violence-hit Uttarakhand town, but it remains in force in the Banbhoolpura area that witnessed arson and vandalism by a mob over the demolition of an illegally-built madrasa on Thursday.

Internet services continue to be suspended to prevent rumours from spreading through social media platforms.Shops on the outskirts of the town opened on Saturday but schools remain closed."Patrolling is continuously being done in the affected area and the situation is under control," Additional Director General (ADG) of Police, Law and Order, A P Anshuman, who is camping in Haldwani, told PTI Videos.

However, the residents of the Banbhoolpura area, where the curfew is still in force, are being allowed to buy essentials from time to time, the ADG said.The movement of trains up to Kathgodam has also been resumed, he added.

No fresh untoward incident has been reported from anywhere, the officer said.Six rioters were killed in Thursday's violence, officials said. *—PTI*

IN SANDESHKHALI

Sec 144, internet suspended after violent protest

KOLKATA, 10 FEB

Prohibitory orders under Section 144 of CrPC were imposed and internet services suspended in Sandeshkhali in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district, where local women held protests demanding the arrest of absconding TMC leader Sheikh Shajahan and his aides, police said on Saturday.

Local women with sticks and brooms in their hands took out processions in Sandeshkhali as the protests intensified on the second day on Friday.

Shajahan has been absconding since last month after a team of Enforcement Directorate (ED) that went to raid his house in an alleged ration scam was attacked by a mob.The protesting women alleged that Shajahan and his "gang" captured swathes of land by force, besides sexually harassing them. Shajahan's supporters also took to the streets, further adding to the tension.Suvendu Adhikari, BJP leader of Opposition in the West Bengal assembly, alleged that human rights have been violated in Sandeshkhali. "Sandeshkhali is a place where the 'rule of law' is non-existent, rather the 'law of rulers' namely Sheikh Shahjahan and his aides was established," he wrote on X.A delegation of BJP MLAs led by Adhikari went to Raj Bhavan here and submitted a memorandum, demanding the intervention of Governor CV Ananda Bose to restore peace in Sandeshkhali. CPI(M) leader Sujan Chakraborty stated that regardless of party affiliations, villagers had erupted against the "lawlessness" in the area.A delegation of Opposition leaders was on Saturday stopped from entering the areas of Sandeshkhali where violent protests were held in the last two days, seeking the arrest of the TMC leader.Shajahan's aide Shiboprasad Hazra's house was vandalised and furniture was torched, police said.

A senior police official said they are taking all precautions to restore peace as the Class 10 board exams are going on. "We will take action against the perpetrators," he said. *—PTI*

BJP workers booked for attack on journalist

PUNE, 10 FEB

Pune police on Saturday registered a case against some workers of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for allegedly attacking journalist Nikhil Wagle's car and booked the latter for alleged violation of prohibitory orders.

BJP workers staged a protest over Wagle's alleged remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and LK Advani after ruling party patriarch was awarded Bharat Ratna.

They threw ink on the car in which Wagle and two others, Aseem Sarode and Vishwambhar Choudhary, were travelling under police protection to 'Nirbhay Bano' event organised by Rashtra Seva Dal in Singhad Road area.

Based on a complaint lodged by a woman, FIR was registered at Parvati police station under sections 147 (rioting), 336 (causing grievous hurt by an act endangering life or personal safety) and other relevant provisions of Indian Penal Code.

A case has also been registered against Wagle and the city unit presidents of BJP, Shiv Sena (UBT) and Congress for allegedly violating section 144 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC).

Wagle has been booked under sections 153A (promoting enmity between different groups), 500 (defamation) and 505 (statements conducing to public mischief) of IPC.

Senior BJP leader Sunil Deodhar had filed a complaint against 64-year-old journalist on Tuesday over his controversial comments. *—PTI*

Wankhede moves HC against ED case

MUMBAI, 10 FEB

Former Mumbai NCB zonal director Sameer Wankhede has moved Bombay High Court challenging the Enforcement Directorate's money laundering case against him.

He claims that it was a "counter blast" to a complaint filed by him against the anti-drug agency's senior official. ED registered the money laundering case against Wankhede after taking cognisance of a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) FIR in an alleged Rs 25 crore bribe demand from Shah Rukh Khan's family to spare his son Aryan Khan in a drug case.Wankhede also sought for the probe being carried out by ED to be stayed till his petition against CBI case is heard and decided.

Both his petitions (one against CBI case and the other against ED case) are likely to come up for hearing on 15 February before a division bench headed by Justice PD Naik. Wankhede claimed he was constrained to approach court in Delhi as both Delhi and Mumbai police had failed to conduct an inquiry into the complaint letters he addressed to them against NCB's Deputy Director General Gyaneshwar Singh. Aryan Khan was arrested in the alleged drug bust case on Cordelia cruise ship on 2 October, 2021.Later, NCB filed a charge sheet in drugs-on-cruise case against 14 accused but gave a clean chit to Aryan Khan. *—PTI*

27 PLACES SEARCHED

Coimbatore car blast case: NIA raids multiple locations in TN

CHENNAI, 10 FEB

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) sleuths on Saturday initiated searches in atleast 27 locations in Tamil Nadu related to the ISIS-inspired car bomb blast case in Coimbatore in which 15 people were arrested.The prime suspect identified as Jamesha Mubeen, whom the agency said was a suicide bomber, was killed when his vehicle carrying an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) exploded in October 2022.

The raids are simultaneously going on in Chennai, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Coimbatore districts, on the premises of those suspected to have links with ISIS or its sympathisers, a source said.

The searches commenced in the small hours today. Further details are awaited.

The case was initially registered by the Ukkadam police in Coimbatore city and subsequently handed over to the NIA, which officially re-registered it on 27 October, 2022.

The arrested suspect has been identified as Tahanaseer, a resident of Coimbatore. He allegedly conspired with Jamesha Mubeen and Mohammed Thoufeek to commit the terror attack in front of the ancient Arulmigu Kottai Sangameshwarar Temple at Eswaran Kovil Street, Ukkadam in Coimbatore on 23 October, the NIA had said.The vehicle carrying the IED was driven by Jamesha Mubeen, with whom Tahanaseer and Mohammed Thoufeeq were closely associated, the agency said. *—PTI*

The raids are simultaneously going on in Chennai, Tiruchirappalli, Madurai, Tirunelveli and Coimbatore districts *PHOTO: PTI*

Quad to become bigger factor in larger regional politics, says Jaishankar

PERTH, 10 FEB

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said he is confident that the relevance of the Quad grouping would grow, on Friday.

It would also become a bigger factor in the larger regional, and beyond the region, politics and policy. Jaishankar's remarks came during a fireside chat with his Australian counterpart Penny Wong at Indian Ocean Conference.

Speaking about Quad or Quadrilateral Security Dialogue comprising India, US, Japan and Australia, Jaishankar said the grouping is the outcome of the changing capabilities of the major powers and the implications that it has for all of world.

Quad was set up in 2017 to counter China's aggressive behaviour in the Indo-Pacific region.

"It also reflects three very important relationships for us with Australia, the US and Japan, which had transformed after the end of the Cold War," Jaishankar said.

"You are going to see an India which will be much more deeply engaged in and much more deeply invested in the Indian Ocean...Our goal should be how to make the Indian Ocean more connected, more seamless and more penetrative than it is today as it has been in the past," he added.

The kind of things that were achieved on the bilateral front in the last decade give reasons to be optimistic. Jaishankar also visited Sailani Avenue in Perth named after Indian-origin soldier Nain Singh Sailani. *—PTI*

NEW DELHI BOOK FAIR

Dharmendra Pradhan with Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to India Saleh bin Eid Al-Husseini and others during the inaugural day of the New Delhi World Book Fair *PHOTO: PTI*

PADMA BHUSHAN WINNER ARTIST RAMACHANDRAN DEAD

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

Renowned artist A Ramachandran died from prolonged illness at his residence here on Saturday. He was 89."He was sick for quite some time now and passed away at 9 this morning from medical complications," his son Rahul told PTI. Details of the last rites will be confirmed, he added.Born in 1935 in Attingal, Kerala, Ramachandran was known for his monumental canvases. In 2005, received the Padma Bhushan. *—PTI*

Biz man helps surgeons during op; probe on

AGARTALA, 10 FEB

The Tripura health department has ordered a probe into an alleged incident in which an orthopaedic implant material supplier assisted surgeons at the operation theatre of a state-run hospital here, an official said on Saturday.

A purported video, which has gone viral on social media, shows the man wearing a surgeon's apron and helping two orthopaedic surgeons during surgical procedures of patients at the operation theatre of Indira Gandhi Memorial (IGM) Hospital, on 19 January.

The IGM Hospital is the second biggest government hospital in Tripura. The man, identified as Jantu Debnath, is a supplier of implant materials for orthopaedic patients."Based on the footage, a four-member committee headed by Joint Director of Health Services, Dr Souvik Debbarma, will probe into the incident thoroughly and submit its findings within a week," Dr Supriya Mallik, the Director of Health Services, told PTI.

Action will be taken if the incident proves to be true, he said, adding a businessman cannot join the surgical procedures at a government hospital.

"Jantu Debanth was not present nor helped the orthopaedic surgeons during surgical procedures at the operation theatre," the medical superintendent of IGM Hospital, Dr Debashri Debbarma, said *—PTI*

LIBRARY WITH 1.8L BOOKS

Patna's Sinha Library turns 100 this year

PATNA, 9 FEB

Patna's famed Sinha Library, home to a rich collection of about 1.8 lakh books including some of the rare volumes from India and abroad, turned 100 on Friday.

A commemorative special cover marking the centenary of the landmark institution was unveiled by Chief Post Master General of Bihar Circle, Anil Kumar at a function held at the historic hall of the library.

The heritage building and its modern block, added a few decades ago, have been illuminated to mark the centennial occasion.

Located in the heart of the Bihar capital, the handsome two-storey old structure was established officially as the 'Srimati Radhika Sinha Institute and Sachchidananda Sinha Library', popularly known as 'Sinha Library'. The institute was named after his wife.

Founded by Sachchidananda Sinha, the library was inaugurated by the then Governor of Bihar and Orissa, Sir Henry Wheeler on 9 February , 1924.

Sachchidananda Sinha, one of the prime makers of modern Bihar, was also the provisional president of the Constituent Assembly of India when it met in Delhi for the first time in 1946.

The institution is run by the Srimati Radhika Sinha Institute and Sachchidananda Sinha Library Trust.

"The library has a rich collection of 1.8 lakh books and copies of some of the oldest newspapers from 1901 onwards. Today is a historic occasion and it is only fitting that a commemorative special cover marking the centenary of this iconic institution has been unveiled and released to mark these eventful 100 years," Sunil Kumar, a senior advocate in the Supreme Court who holds the chair of the trust, told PTI here.

Kumar along with several other guests and some of the students who visit the library, attended the celebrations as the old portraits of Sachchidananda Sinha and Radhika Sinha adorned the walls.The library is home to rare bibliographic treasures such as volumes on the Hansard debates held in the House of Commons in the UK, Parliament sessions of India, The Indian Review, The Calcutta Review, Sacred Book of the East volumes edited by Max Muller, Ancient Indian Tradition and Mythology volumes. *—PTI*

Founded by Sachchidananda Sinha, the library was inaugurated by the then governor of Bihar and Orissa *PHOTO: PTI*

NEW YEAR

Malaysian ethnic Chinese pray on the first day of Lunar New Year's holidays at a temple in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on Saturday. The Chinese Lunar New Year marks the start of the Year of the Dragon, according to the Chinese zodiac
PHOTO: PTI

China's presence in South Pacific spark concerns

Taiwan elected Lai Ching-te, also known as William Lai, to be its next president on 13 January. His election marks the continuation of a government that promotes an independent Taiwan.Just two days later, the Pacific nation of Nauru severed ties with Taiwan and transferred its diplomatic allegiance to Beijing.

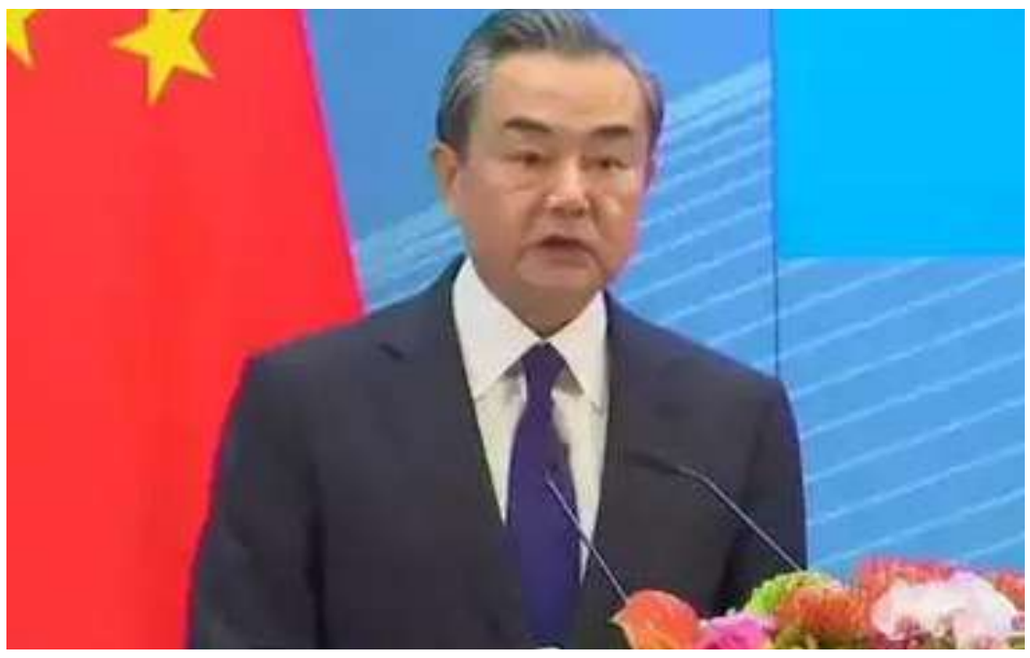
More recently, on 27 January, Tuvalu's pro-Taiwan prime minister, Kausea Natano, lost his seat in the nation's general election. Natano's finance minister, Seve Paeniu, who is aiming for the prime ministership himself, was returned to his seat. In his campaign, Paeniu pledged to review Tuvalu's relationships with China and Taiwan.

These examples indicate China's growing influence in the south Pacific, a region that the world's major powers are competing for influence over. But why is the region significant? And how are these major powers exerting their influence there?

Taiwan has been governed independently since 1949. But Beijing believes it should be reunited with the rest of China. It is not an option for states to diplomatically recognise both China and Taiwan – China forces them to choose.China has, for example, imposed significant political, diplomatic and economic sanctions on countries that continue to formally recognise Taiwan. In 2022, China curbed imports from Lithuania to punish the country for allowing Taiwan to open a de facto embassy in the country.

But China also offers states – and their governing elites – economic and political incentives for withdrawing diplomatic recognition of Taiwan. It has, in the past, used its influence in the UN and other international organisations to block assistance or elect specific people to international positions.

Nauru's change of diplomatic position, and the political debate unfolding in Tuvulu, should be understood as part of China's longstanding effort to prevent and reduce recognition of Taiwan as a sovereign state.



China, has legitimate economic and political interests in the south Pacific as is a vital export market for natural resources from Pacific island states and is a key source of incoming tourism
PHOTO: ANI

But they are a significant step forward for China. Nauru has a leading position in the Pacific Islands Forum – the main political decision-making body for the region – so the country's change of stance could lead to wider formal diplomatic changes in the south Pacific.China, of course, has legitimate economic and political interests in the south Pacific too. It is a vital export market for natural resources from Pacific island states and is a key source of incoming tourism.

Competing for influence

Nauru's decision is another diplomatic setback for Taiwan, which is now formally recognised by just 11 countries. However, this is not in itself a serious concern for the US, Australia and their allies.

They all formally recognise China, while at the same time maintaining close, informal links with Taiwan. Their focus is on trying to limit the depth of Chinese political and economic influence over Pacific island states and elsewhere in the Asia-Pacific region. The US is concerned that growing Chinese political influence may ultimately result in it enjoying significant military presence in the region.Pacific region encompasses the US state of Hawaii, multiple US territories, and is also home to several crucial US military bases. So, the US has made an effort to enhance its diplomatic relations in the region by providing financial support for initiatives around climate change adaption, sustainable fishing and economic growth.

However, increased tension between China and the west over the past decade has made it increasingly challenging to reign in Chinese influence. China's struggle for influence in the region now also includes taking opportunities to challenge previously undisputed western security dominance in the south Pacific. In 2022, China put forward a proposal for a diplomatic, economic and security agreement with the region. The agreement was, however, later abandoned due to resistance from some Pacific island nations at the urging of the US and Australia.When president, Donald Trump launched a number of deals with Pacific islands including Nauru, Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Palau and Micronesia. However, Trump's strategy for a "free and open Indo-Pacific" had limited success. This was not only due to his confrontational posture towards China, but also to his threatening and protectionist "America first" rhetoric.Joe Biden's comparatively measured diplomacy has seen more success. In 2022, the Biden administration announced its "Pacific partnership strategy".The shift of diplomatic ties from Taiwan to China does not mean that Pacific island nations want to reduce their ties with the west. But the US, Australia and their allies will need to invest a lot more in diplomatic, economic and security assistance if they want to counter China's growing influence there.

Courtesy, The Conversation

SALAR ساڵار

Do one-sixth of Indians have mild brain disorder?

India is often perceived as a country with a young population, while European and North American populations are regarded as ageing. Although this is true, the country's demographics are rapidly shifting, according to a UN study. And people aged 60 and over are expected to constitute 20 per cent of the population by 2050.

Given this trend, there have been numerous attempts – using different methods – to determine the prevalence of dementia on the subcontinent. A new study, published in PLOS One, suggests that the prevalence of dementia in India is higher than previously thought.

The researchers investigated the number of people with dementia in India by establishing how many people aged 60 and over in the country have a neurocognitive disorder.

Neurocognitive disorders – changes to cognition (thinking) because of a potential underlying brain disorder – are commonly divided into minor and major disorders. Dementia is considered a major neurocognitive disorder, while mild cognitive impairment, a common early stage of dementia, a minor neurocognitive disorder.

The study results showed that nearly one-sixth (17.6 per cent) of people over 59 in India have a mild neurocognitive disorder, while 7.2 per centhave a major neurocognitive disorder.

Extrapolating these estimates to the Indian population over 59 years of age (104 million) suggests that 24 million of those people have potentially mild cognitive impairment, while 9.9 million potentially have dementia.

There are 14.5 million people over 60 in the UK, meaning the dementia rate is about 6.5 per cent, whereas, according to this latest study, the dementia rate in India is about 9.5per cent. However, the sheer size of the estimates in the study explains why the UN is paying closer attention to the ageing and dementia population in India. But how were mild cognitive impairment or dementia established in the study?

Mild cognitive impairment and dementia are commonly based on performance on cognitive tests and whether cognitive changes affect everyday activities.

For mild cognitive impairment, people will have mild cognitive changes, but they do not affect their everyday activities. Whereas for dementia, people will have cognitive changes that will affect their everyday activities.

Within the study, participants were asked to perform cognitive tests and their family members were asked to report changes in their everyday activities. For example, if they had slight memory changes but they did not affect their everyday activity would mean they would be considered to have mild cognitive impairment.

But if they had more significant memory problems and their family reported noticeable changes to their everyday activities, they then would be considered to have dementia.Despite cognition and everyday activity being key to dementia diagnostics worldwide, they have significant shortcomings, in particular for assessments in developing countries, such as India.

The main reason for this is that most cognitive tests were developed for literate populations with higher levels of formal education, whereas low formal education and illiteracy remain very prevalent in older and rural populations of developing countries.

For the current study, nearly half of their participants had either no formal education or were illiterate. This, therefore, creates uncertainty if the cognitive changes are because of the lower education or literacy levels of the person being tested or the first signs of dementia.

But what else can we do to determine if someone is either at risk or has dementia?

Blood might be the answer. A simple blood test to determine someone's risk for dementia has been the holy grail in dementia research for decades. Now such blood tests have become a reality, at least in research studies.

Dementia blood tests are still so new that they have not made it into the clinics, but it seems only a matter of time until these tests will be widely available across memory clinics and doctor's surgeries.

Having a blood test result might remove the ambiguity of whether changes to cognition are the first signs of dementia or relate to other factors, such as level of formal education.

People in developing countries, such as India, will particularly benefit from such blood tests as the relevance of cognitive changes is then not as important anymore but can be used to support a diagnosis.It will be interesting to see whether the estimates for mild cognitive impairment and dementia in the populations will change because of the new blood tests, as they might be more specific in determining who really has the disease or is at risk of it. A few drops of blood might change our perceptions of dementia in the future.

Courtesy, The Conversation

The study results showed that nearly one-sixth (17.6 per cent) of people over 59 in India have a mild neurocognitive disorder, while 7.2 per centhave a major neurocognitive disorder
PHOTO: PIXABAY

LETTERS Write to us at salar@salar.news

Gaza residents resort to animal feed and rice for survival

People living in the isolated north of Gaza have said that children are going without food for days, as aid convoys are increasingly denied permits to enter. Some residents have resorted to grinding animal feed into flour to survive, but even stocks of those grains are now dwindling, they say.

People have also described digging down into the soil to access water pipes, for drinking and washing.

The UN has warned that acute malnutrition among young children in the north has risen sharply, and is now above the critical threshold of 15 per cent.

The UN's humanitarian coordination agency, Ocha, says more than half the aid missions to the north of Gaza were denied access last month, and that there is increasing interference from Israeli forces in how and where aid is delivered.

It says 300,000 people estimated to be living in northern areas are largely cut off from assistance, and face a growing risk of famine.

A spokesman for the Israeli military agency tasked with coordinating aid access in Gaza said in a briefing last month that there was "no starvation in Gaza. Period." The agency, Cogat, has repeatedly said it does not limit the amount of humanitarian aid sent to Gaza.

Mahmoud Shalabi, a local medical aid worker in Beit Lahia, said people had been grinding grains used for animal feed into flour, but that even that was now running out.

"People are not finding it in the market," he said. "It's unavailable nowadays in the north of Gaza, and Gaza City."

He also said stocks of tinned food were disappearing.

The World Food Programme (WFP) told the BBC this week that four out of the last five aid convoys into the north had been stopped by Israeli forces, meaning a gap of two weeks between deliveries to Gaza City.

'Serious risk of famine'

"We know there is a very serious risk of famine in Gaza if we don't provide very significant volumes of food assistance on a regular basis," said the WFP regional chief, Matt Hollingworth.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (Ocha) said there had been a sharp increase in the number of aid missions denied access to northern Gaza: with 56 per cent of deliveries denied access in January, up from 14 per cent in October to December.

It also said the Israeli military "at times required justifications" for quantities of fuel destined for health facilities, and "imposed reductions on the volume of assistance, such as the quantity of food".

A famine risk assessment, carried out by several UN agencies, estimated that almost a third of residents in northern areas could now be facing a "catastrophic" lack of food, though restrictions on accessing the area make real-time measurements very difficult.

Families in northern areas are also struggling to find reliable water supplies.

"Many of us are now drinking unpotable water. There are no pipes; we have to dig for water," explained Mahmoud Salah in Beit Lahia.

Video filmed in the Jabalia neighbourhood north of Gaza City shows residents sitting among the rubble of bombed out streets, digging down into the earth to tap large underground water pipes."We get water here once every 15 days," Yusuf al-Ayoti said. "The water is dirty. Our children are inflamed and their teeth are eroded from the dirty water. There is sand in it, and it's very salty."

After four months of war, the makeshift solutions for bridging the hunger gaps are wearing thin. The territory was reliant on food aid before the war; now much of its agricultural industry has been ruined or abandoned.

'The destruction is vast'

New figures from the UN suggest that more than half the agricultural land in the central region of Deir al-Balah has been damaged. This includes an olive press and farmland belonging to Bassem Younis Abu Zayed.

"It looks like the aftermath of an earthquake," he said. "The destruction is vast, covering neighbouring buildings and farm animals. Even if we manage to restore the mill, 80-90 of the olives have gone. It's not just a loss for this year, it's a loss for the next several years."Further south, in the border town of Rafah, more than a million people displaced by the fighting elsewhere now jostle for space with the town's 300,000 residents.Aid can be blocked by fighting, bureaucracy or rubble.

Earlier this week, a food convoy waiting to head north in Gaza was hit by naval gunfire.

But deliveries are also complicated by the growing desperation of Gaza's people, says Matt Hollingworth.

"We need the law and order issue resolved, so that we're not having to negotiate our way through crowds of desperately hungry people, to get to other people that we've yet to reach," he said.

"It's probably the level of helplessness that worries me. People have lost hope."

A deal between Israel and Hamas is seen by many as the only way to get more aid into Gaza, and get Israeli hostages out.

As Israel bombs Rafah, ahead of a widely expected ground offensive there, leaders on both sides are under pressure to end the suffering of people trapped in Gaza - their enemy's, and their own. \

—BBC News

People have also resorted to digging down into the soil to access water pipes, for drinking and washing
PHOTO: PTI

PHOTO: AP

Clashes spread in Senegal over election day

DAKAR, 10 FEB

Violent protests in Senegal against the postponement of presidential elections have spread across the country, with the first fatality reported. A student died in clashes with police on Friday in the northern city of Saint-Louis, an opposition leader and a local hospital source said. In the capital Dakar, security forces fired tear gas and stun grenades to disperse the crowds. The 25 February elections were last week delayed by MPs until 15 December. President Macky Sall had earlier called off the polls indefinitely, arguing this was needed to resolve a dispute over the eligibility of presidential candidates. Lawmakers later extended Sall's mandate by 10 months.
—BBC NEWS

Indian truck driver charged with drug trafficking in US

OTTAWA, 10 FEB

An Indian truck driver from Canada has been charged with "intent to distribute controlled substances" after he was caught attempting to bring an estimated Canadian dollars 8.7 million worth of cocaine into the US, according to a media report. Gagandeep Singh was caught by Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers after a border canine found the suspected cocaine at a Windsor-Detroit border crossing. The discovery was made on February 5 at an outbound customs inspection at the Ambassador Bridge in Detroit, according to court documents obtained by CTV News. The seizure is "consistent with large-scale drug distribution activities", according to the authorities. CBP officers "selected" a driver --- a citizen of India and a resident of Canada for inspection.
—PTI

Philippines: Child rescued after 60 hours under rubble

MANILA, 10 FEB

A three-year-old girl has been rescued from a landslide in southern Philippines sixty hours after she was buried. Rescuers had given up hope of finding more survivors, and hailed the rescue of the child on Friday as "a miracle". The landslide took place near a gold mining village of Masara in the Davao de Oro province in the Mindanao region on Tuesday. Officials say 28 people have died and about 77 others are missing. Photos and video posted on the Philippine Red Cross Facebook page on Friday show rescue workers carrying the girl, wrapped in an emergency blanket and hooked to an oxygen tank, into a hospital in nearby Mawab municipality. Edward Macapili, a disaster agency official of the Davao de Oro province, said "it's a miracle," adding that searchers had believed those missing were probably dead.
—BBC News

US: Plane crashes on Florida highway, two killed

FLORIDA, 10 FEB

A small plane crash took place on Florida highway on Friday afternoon, leaving two people dead, Fox News reported, citing the Collier County Sheriff's Office, which confirmed it to the publication. The plane, a Bombardier Challenger 600 business jet, crashed on Interstate 75 in Naples, Florida, with five people on board, according to the FAA (Federal Aviation Administration). The airplane departed from Ohio State University Airport at 1 pm ET, according to FOX 35. The pilot requested an emergency landing at Naples Airport (where the jet was going) just after 3 pm ET, claiming that both engines had failed. According to the sheriff's office, all southbound lanes were closed and northbound lanes were also affected. *—ANI*

Pak army urges unity as ex-PMs declare election win

Against all odds, poll results show Imran Khan's support is solid

ISLAMABAD, 10 FEB

Pakistan's powerful army chief has urged the country to leave "anarchy and polarisation" behind as two ex-prime ministers declared victory in an election that has defied expectations.

With most results in, independent candidates linked to jailed former PM Imran Khan have won most seats. But Nawaz Sharif, another ex-PM widely seen as having the army's backing, has urged others to join him in coalition.

Officials have also rejected Western criticism of how the election was run. With no clear outcome, General Asim Munir called on all parties to show maturity and unity, saying the politics of polarisation did "not suit a progressive country of 250 million people".

"Elections are not a zero-sum competition of winning and losing but an exercise to determine the mandate of the people," Gen Munir said. Fourteen National Assembly seats are yet to be determined - all in the vast and sparsely-populated Balochistan province - but both Mr Khan and Mr Sharif say they have won.

Khan released an AI-generated video message rejecting his rival's claim and calling on supporters to celebrate. He has been jailed on charges of leaking state secrets, corruption and an unlawful marriage and his PTI party was banned from taking part in the polls.

Former Pakistan prime minister Nawaz Sharif addresses Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz supporters following the initial results of the country's general elections, in Lahore, Pakistan *PHOTO: PTI*

About 100 of the wining candidates are independents and all but eight of them are backed by the PTI, the non-profit Free and Fair Election Network said.

Sharif's PML-N party won 71 seats ad the PPP of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the son of assassinated PM Benazir Bhutto, got 53. The rest were won by smaller parties and independents.
—BBC News

Jailed former Pak PM Imran Khan gets bail

ISLAMABAD, 10 FEB

- The court said there was no justification to keep Khan, 71, under arrest as all accused in 9 May cases were on bail

An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Saturday granted bail to jailed former Pakistan premier Imran Khan in 12 cases linked to the 9 May attacks on military installations.

ATC Judge Malik Ejaz Asif granted bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party founder Khan after fulfilling a surety bond of Rs 0.1 million in all 12 cases, including the General Headquarters (Pakistan Army) and Army Museum attack, The Express Tribune Pakistan reported.

The court said there was no justification to keep Khan, 71, under arrest as all accused in 9 May cases were on bail. Khan will remain in jail as he is convicted in many other cases. The court's order came a day after independents backed by Khan's party won nearly 100 seats in the National Assembly.

Former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi was also granted bail in 13 cases in the same case. Khan and PTI stalwart Qureshi were indicted in the cases on 6 February. The two were produced before the court, where the former prime minister informed the judge that he was illegally arrested on 9 May from the Islamabad High Court (IHC) premises.

Khan was booked in multiple cases related to the 9 May violence that erupted following his arrest in an alleged corruption case.
—PTI

POLITICAL TURMOIL

3 militants, police officer killed in Pakistan attack

Three attackers were gunned down during the fighting *PHOTO: PTI*

PESHAWAR, 10 FEB

At least three militants and a police officer were killed during a gunfight following an attack on a police mobile van in the restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan. An Additional SHO was killed when unknown militants opened fire at a van on patrolling duty, leading to a gunfight between the police and the attackers for over an hour in the Darazinda area of Dera Ismail Khan district bordering South Waziristan, police said. Three attackers were gunned down during the fighting, the police said. Heavy contingents of police rushed to the site to control the situation, the police said. *—PTI*

Iraq could be pushed into conflict: Minister

BAGHDAD, 10 FEB

Iraq could be pushed into conflict by tit-for-tat attacks on its territory by Iranian-backed militias and US forces, Iraqi foreign minister, Dr Fuad Hussein, has told BBC.

"The tension nowadays between Iran and the United States is very high," he said. "I hope both sides will stop their attacks. They are not going to solve their problem on Iraqi soil," he said. "We paid a very big price."

In the past week or so, that price has involved a wave of US air strikes killing 17 fighters from Iranian-backed armed groups. Then came a deadly missile attack on a militia commander, Abu Bakir Al Saadi, which turned his jeep into a fireball on a residential street in Baghdad. That attack was condemned by the government here as "a clear-cut assassination" without regard for civilian lives or international law - a stunning indictment of an ally.

The American strikes were in retaliation for the killing of three US soldiers in Jordan. The US military says it will "continue to take necessary action" to protect its own people. As the two sides battle it out, Iraq is getting burnt.

The minister said talks had to resume on the withdrawal of 2,500 US troops, deployed here as advisors since 2014 to help prevent a resurgence of the so-called Islamic State. The word - in government and on the streets - is that they have overstayed their welcome.

"The majority of Iraqi people do not want to have foreign forces on Iraqi soil," he told us.

"Those who have been invited (the Americans), we will do it through negotiation. And those who have not been invited must leave, we hope also through negotiation." The uninvited guests - at least not invited by him - are powerful pro-Iranian militias here who have been targeting US troops. Officially, many are part of Iraq's security forces. Critics say they are foot soldiers for Iran.
—BBC News

7 killed in Russian strike in Ukraine

KYIV, 10 FEB

PHOTO: AP

A Russian drone strike on Kharkiv, Ukraine's second largest city, killed at least seven people overnight, including three children, Kharkiv region governor Oleh Syniehubov reported on Saturday.

He said the Iranian-made Shahed drone hit civilian infrastructure in the Nemyshlyan district on the city, causing a massive fire that burned down 15 private houses. Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said more than 50 people had been evacuated and that emergency workers had contained the blaze by Saturday morning.

The Ukrainian air force said air defence systems destroyed 23 out of 31 Iranian Shahed drones launched by Russia overnight. The drones primarily targeted the northeastern Kharkiv region and the southern province of Odesa, the statement said.

Odesa regional governor Oleh Kiper said four people were injured there by the overnight drone attacks. The attacks came in three waves, he said. The first targeted the regional capital — the port city of Odesa. All nine drones were shot down, but the debris damaged port infrastructure and injured one person.

The second and the third waves targeted port infrastructure in the Danube river area, Kiper said. A total of 12 drones were shot down and three people were injured. Romania's Ministry of National Defence said on Saturday that Russia carried out overnight drone attacks on Ukraine's river ports of Ismail and Reni, near the border with Romania.

The ministry said that an F-16 jet of the Turkish Air Force was deployed from a Romanian airbase around 1:15 a.m. to carry out "reconnaissance missions" in national airspace to monitor the situation. Text alerts were also issued to residents in two counties adjacent to the attacks. *—AP*

CARNIVAL PARADE

Dancers from the Mancha Verde samba school perform on a float during a carnival parade in Sao Paulo, Brazil on Saturday *PHOTO: AP/PTI*

At least 28 Palestinians killed in Israeli strikes in Rafah

RAFAH, 10 FEB

Israeli airstrikes killed at least 28 Palestinians in Rafah early Saturday, hours after Israel's prime minister said he asked the military to plan for the evacuation of hundreds of thousands of people from the southern Gaza city ahead of a ground invasion.

Benjamin Netanyahu did not provide details or a timeline, but the announcement set off widespread panic. More than half of Gaza's 2.3 million people are packed into Rafah, many after being uprooted repeatedly by Israeli evacuation orders that now cover two-thirds of Gaza's territory. It's not clear where they could run next.

Word of the invasion plans capped a week of increasingly public friction between Netanyahu and the Biden administration. US officials have said an invasion of Rafah without a plan for the civilian population would lead to disaster.

Israel has carried out airstrikes in Rafah almost daily, even after telling civilians in recent weeks to seek shelter there from ground combat in the city of Khan Younis, just to the north. Overnight into Saturday, three airstrikes on homes in the Rafah area killed 28 people, according to a health official and Associated Press journalists who saw the bodies arriving at hospitals.

300 medical personnel, 450 patients and 10,000 displaced people are sheltering in the hospital *PHOTO: AP*

In Khan Younis, the focus of the current ground combat, Israeli forces opened fire at Nasser Hospital, the area's largest, killing at least one person and wounding several, said Ashraf al-Qidra, a spokesman for the Gaza Health Ministry.

He said medical staff are no longer able to move between the facility's buildings because of the intense fire. He said 300 medical personnel, 450 patients and 10,000 displaced people are sheltering in the hospital.

A rift with Washington

The steadily climbing Palestinian death toll — now at almost 28,000 after four months of war, according to Gaza health officials — has contributed to the friction between Netanyahu and Washington.

Israel holds Hamas responsible for civilian deaths because it fights from within civilian areas, but US officials have pushed back, calling for more surgical strikes. President Joe Biden said this week Israel's response is "over the top". *—AP*

Prez poll: Indonesians join the final campaign

JAKARTA, 10 FEB

The three candidates in Indonesia's presidential election held their final campaign events in front of tens of thousands of people on Saturday, four days before more than 200 million citizens cast their votes in the world's third-largest democracy.

The frontrunner, former special forces general Prabowo Subianto and his running mate, 36-year-old Surakarta mayor Gibran Rakabuming Raka, held their final rally at a Jakarta stadium. "On Feb. 14, we will all determine the future of our children and grandchildren. ... We strive to bring prosperity to all Indonesian people. We will continue what has been built by previous presidents," Subianto said. While he is the oldest candidate, Subianto's running mate is the youngest — though his selection provoked controversy as he is the son of the current president. They are pursuing youth support, with social media and video billboard campaigns featuring Pixar-style animated depictions of themselves. They're meant to soften the image of the gruff-talking former general, who's been accused of past human rights abuses, which he has denied.

Former Jakarta governor Anies Baswedan together with his running mate, Muhaimin Iskandar, held their final campaign event at another stadium in the capital. "Our responsibility is to work together to stop injustice, inequality and bring about change," Baswedan said in front of tens of thousands of residents and the leaders of the political parties who support his race.

Meanwhile, thousands of people dressed in black and white shirts gathered in Central Java province to support the governing party's candidate. Ganjar Pranowo, a former governor, held his final rallies in Surakarta and Semarang, in the area that is vital to his campaign. *—AP*

DEMOCRATS RALLY AROUND BIDEN AFTER AGE CONCERNS

WASHINGTON, 10 FEB

Democrats are defending President Joe Biden after a report on his handling of classified documents raised concerns about his age and mental fitness.

Biden will not be charged for keeping classified documents, but the report cast him as a "well-meaning, elderly man with a poor memory". Vice-President Kamala Harris slammed the description as "gratuitous, inaccurate and inappropriate". She also alleged the prosecutor was "clearly politically motivated".

Robert Hur, a Donald Trump appointee who has previously clerked for two well-known conservative judges, was appointed to lead the Biden classified document probe last year. His selection by US Attorney General Merrick Garland that January came as the justice department faced criticism from Republicans over a separate special counsel appointment to investigate Donald Trump's alleged mishandling of top secret files.
—BBC News

WORTH $3 BILLION

UN experts investigating 58 suspected North Korean cyberattacks

UNITED NATIONS, 10 FEB

UN experts say they are investigating 58 suspected North Korean cyberattacks between 2017 and 2023 valued at approximately USD 3 billion, with the money reportedly being used to help fund its development of weapons of mass destruction.

And the high volume of cyberattacks by North Korean hacking groups who report to the Reconnaissance General Bureau, North Korea's primary foreign intelligence organization, is reportedly continuing, the panel of experts said in the executive summary of a new report to the UN Security Council obtained Friday by Associated Press.

The report covering the period from July 2023 to January 2024 and reflecting contributions from unidentified UN member nations and other sources, was sent to the 15-member council as North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has raised tensions in the region. He is threatening to annihilate South Korea if provoked and escalating weapons demonstrations. In response, the United States, South Korea and Japan have strengthened their combined military exercises.

The experts said North Korea "continued to flout (UN) sanctions," further developed its nuclear weapons, and produced nuclear fissile materials – the weapons' key ingredients.

The experts said a light-water reactor at North Korea's main nuclear complex at Yongbyon "appeared to be operational." South Korea's defence minister said in late December that the reactor would likely be formally operational by the summer, amid suspicions the North may use it as a new source of fissile materials for nuclear weapons.

North Korea has long produced weapons-grade plutonium from its widely known 5-megawatt reactor at Yongbyon. The light-water reactor would be an additional source of bomb fuels, and observers say its bigger capacity could allow it to produce more plutonium. Yongbyon has a uranium enrichment facility as well.

The panel said activities at North Korea's Punggyeri nuclear test site "continued." US and South Korean officials have said North Korea is likely preparing to conduct its seventh nuclear test from the site, which would be the first since 2017. *—PTI*

The report covering the period from July 2023 to January 2024 and reflecting contributions from UN member nations *PHOTO: AP*

Fintech platform GroMo distributes ₹ 100cr in payouts

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

Fintech platform GroMo on Saturday said it has distributed Rs 100 crore in payouts to its partner agents on the eve of completing the five-year milestone.The company aims to achieve Rs 1,000 crore in earnings for the GroMo partner agents in the next five years, the platform, engaged in facilitating the distribution of financial products, said in a statement.Founded by IIT Delhi alumni Ankit Khandelwal and DarpanKhurana, GroMo is playing a role in driving financial inclusion and enhancing financial literacy in tier 2, 3 and smaller cities.It provides access to financial products like bank accounts, insurance, credit cards, loans and investment options from the leading banking and non-banking financial institutions, it said.The company has expanded its product portfolio from 25 to over 160 in the last couple of years, it said, adding that the platform has successfully onboarded over 36 lakh partners, doubling its numbers in just a year, and currently operates across 19,000 pin codes in India. GroMo's tech-enabled community-driven platform bridges the financial literacy gap by offering a diverse range of over 160 financial products, including insurance, investments, credit cards, and loans, among others, from renowned brands. *—PTI*

Indian Overseas Bank to open 88 new branches this year

CHENNAI, 10 FEB

Public sector Indian Overseas Bank has drawn up expansion plans to open 88 new branches during the year commemorating the 88th Foundation Day celebrations, a top official said on Saturday. The Chennai-headquartered bank marking the occasion unveiled RuPay Credit Card variants, IOB Freedom Savings and Current Account Variant and Digital Documents Execution for online locker agreements.After paying rich tributes to the late M Ct M Chidambaram Chettiyar, who founded the bank on this day in 1937, the bank's Managing Director Ajay Kumar Srivastava said they plan to open 88 new branches during the year."This bold expansion initiative underscores the bank's unwavering dedication to offering comprehensive financial services, thereby fostering economic vibrancy and inclusivity in communities spanning the length and breadth of the nation," he said.Meanwhile, Indian Overseas Bank said it has increased the interest rates on Rupees Retail Term Deposits for 444 days by 20 basis points with immediate effect.Retail term depositors would receive an interest rate of 7.30 per cent, senior citizens 7.80 per cent, and Super Senior Citizens 8.05 per cent on term deposits with 444 days. *—PTI*

US FCC makes AI-generated robocalls illegal

WASHINGTON, 10 FEB

The federal agency that regulates communication in the US has made robocalls that use AI-generated voices illegal.The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) announced the move on Thursday, saying it will take effect immediately.It gives the state power to prosecute any bad actors behind these calls, the FCC said.It comes amid a rise in robocalls that have mimicked the voices of celebrities and political candidates."Bad actors are using AI-generated voices in unsolicited robocalls to extort vulnerable family members, imitate celebrities, and misinform voters," said FCC chairwoman Jessica Rosenworcel in a statement on Thursday."We're putting the fraudsters behind these robocalls on notice."The move comes on the heels of last month incidentin which voters received robocalls impersonating US President Joe Biden ahead of the state's presidential primary.The calls encouraged voters not to cast ballots in the primary. *—BBC News*

JSW GROUP SIGNS MOU TO SET UP ₹40K CR EV PROJECTS

The project consists of a 50 GWH EV battery plant, EV, lithium refinery

BHUBANESWAR, 10 FEB

IN ODISHA

MoU was signed two weeks after state cabinet approved a special incentive package for the groups ambitious EV and component manufacturing projects *PHOTO: PTI*

- The project with an investment of Rs 40,000 crore, will help create over 10,000 jobs for the youth, marking a significant growth in employment generation in the state. The project will also spur employment generation in ancillary and support services

JSW group on Saturday signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Odisha government for establishment of an Integrated Electric Vehicle (EV) and EV Battery manufacturing project at an investment of Rs 40,000 crore in state.

At Naraj in Cuttack district JSW group will set up an EV vehicle, and component manufacturing plant, while at Paradip in Jagatsinghpur district, it will set up a copper smelter and lithium refinery. The project consists of a 50 GWH EV battery plant, EV, lithium refinery, copper smelter and related component manufacturing units.

MoU was signed two weeks after state cabinet approved a special incentive package for the groups ambitious EV and component manufacturing projects.

Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik said this day marks a great leap forward in the state's journey towards industrial excellence and sustainable development.

"Powered by 5T (transformational) initiative, Odisha is on a steady path of transformation. The establishment of the JSW Group's Electric Vehicle manufacturing unit is a testament to our state's evolving industrial landscape. This strategic move underscores our commitment to sustainable development, and thereby, positioning Odisha as a pivotal player in India", Patnaik said.

Chief Minister also said that this project will enhance the livelihood of thousands of families and contribute to the socio-economic uplift of our region. It will also catalyse the growth of MSMEs, spurring the development of a vibrant ecosystem of ancillary industries. He also underscored that the project heralds Odisha's significant entry into the ever-growing automobile industry sector in India.

The project with an investment of Rs 40,000 crore, will help create over 10,000 jobs for the youth, marking a significant growth in employment generation in the state. The project will also spur employment generation in ancillary and support services. It will catalyse MSME development, opening a plethora of opportunities in auto component supply chain and services sector.

"Odisha has all the potential to become a One Trillion Dollar economy", said Sajjan Jindal, Chairman JSW Group.

Stating that the company's long-standing relationship with Odisha and its people forms the foundation of the new venture, Jindal said this project is a milestone in our journey, reflecting our commitment to the state's development and prosperity. *—PTI*

Paytm forms advisory committee to strengthen compliances

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

The panel is chaired by former SEBI Chairman M Damodaran, to work with the Board to strengthen compliance *PHOTO: X*

Board of One 97 Communications Limited, which operates popular fintech brand Paytm, announced the formation of a Group Advisory Committee.

It is chaired by former SEBI Chairman M Damodaran, to work with the Board in further strengthening compliance, and regulatory matters.

The company said that Committee includes veteran professionals like MM Chitale, former president of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) and a former governing Council Member of Banking Codes and Standards Board of India nominated by RBI.

MeleveetilDamodaran, IAS (Retd.), will serve as Chairperson of Committee, who brings extensive experience in corporate governance, restructuring, and regulatory leadership.

He has previously served as Chairman of Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) and has chaired high-powered committees for Government of India and Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and was also elected Chairman of the EMC of the International Organisation of Securities Commission (IOSCO).

The other Committee member, Mukund Manohar Chitale, who is former President of Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (CAI), former Chairman of National Advisory Committee on Accounting Standards (NACAS), a former governing Council Member of Banking Codes and Standards Board of India nominated by RBI, and a member of Primary Advisory Market Committee of SEBI.

Ramachandran Rajaraman, who is former Chairman and Managing Director of Andhra Bank, a former Whole Time Director of Syndicate Bank, and a member of the Advisory Board at Central Vigilance Commission.

The Company's management says it is committed to drive sustainable business growth while adhering to a regulatory and compliance framework. *—ANI*

Interest rates on PF 2023-24 put at 8.25%

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

PHOTO: PTI

An interest rate of 8.25 per cent would be provided on Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) deposits for 2023-24, and a decision around it was taken at 235th meeting of Central Board of Trustees held on Saturday.

In 2022-23, the interest rate was at 8.15 per cent, which was the lowest since 1977-78.

This interest rate will be officially notified in the government gazette after approval by Ministry of Finance. Subsequently, EPFO will credit the approved rate of interest to its subscribers' accounts.

The meeting of Central Board of Trustees was chaired by Union Minister for Labour and Employment Bhupender Yadav and vice-chaired by MoSRameshwarTeli.

"The move is a step towards fulfilling PM Modiji'sguarantee of strengthening social security for India's workforce," Minister Yadav posted on X after the meeting.

During the meeting, Board of the retirement fund body recommended a distribution of income amount of Rs 1, 07,000 crores to EPF members' accounts on a total principal amount of about Rs 13 lakh crores, which was Rs 91,151.66 crores and Rs 11.02 lakh crores in the financial year 2022-23, respectively.

Compared to the previous financial year, there has been significant growth. The income has grown by more than 17.39 per cent, while the principal amount has increased by 17.97 per cent. This suggests a healthy financial performance and potentially strong returns for the members.

EPFO is a social security organization responsible for providing social security benefits in the form of Provident, Pension and Insurance Funds to the organized workforce of country. *—ANI*

Govt blocks 1.4L mobile numbers over financial frauds

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

Financial Services Secretary Vivek Joshi on Friday chaired a meeting on cyber security in the financial services sector in which various issues including onboarding of banks and financial institutions on the Citizen Financial Cyber Fraud Reporting and Management System (CFCFRMS) platform through API integration were discussed.

Integration of CFCFRMS platform with the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (NCRP) to centralise the platform that will enable effective collaboration between Police, Banks, and Financial Institutions, allowing for real-time monitoring and prevention of fraudulent activities was deliberated, an official release said.

The banks and financial institutions are required to phase out the use of regular 10-digit numbers and use specific number series such as '140xxx' for commercial or promotional activities as prescribed by TRAI, the statement said.

The meeting took stock of the action points which emerged during the discussion in the last meeting held in November and reviewed the preparedness of the banks and other financial institutions in tackling the challenges arising from cyber security in the financial services sector, increasing trend of digital payment frauds, and readiness of all the concerned stakeholders in this regard.

During the deliberation, it was noted that the Department of Telecom (DoT) has developed ASTR, an AI-machine learning-based engine, to detect mobile connections taken on fake/ forged documents. *—PTI*

ESIC extends medical benefits with new norms

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

The Employees' State Insurance Corporation (ESIC) on Saturday decided to extend medical benefits to superannuated insured persons with relaxed norms.The decision was taken at the 193rd meeting of ESIC under the chairmanship of Union Minister Bhupender Yadav, a labour ministry statement said.

Approved a proposal to provide medical benefits to the insured superannuating workers who went out of the ESI Scheme coverage due to exceeding the wage ceiling, if the worker was under insurable employment for at least 5 years before superannuation/ voluntary retirement, it stated.People who were in the insurable employment for at least 5 years after April 1, 2012 and superannuated/voluntarily retired on or after April 1, 2017 with wages up to Rs 30,000 per month will be benefitted under the new scheme.To augment the service delivery mechanism in North-Eastern states to fulfil the vision of Act East Policy of the government, the ESIC relaxed the existing norms for establishment of dispensaries, medical infrastructure/regional/sub regional offices in NE states including Sikkim. *—PTI*

FCA ROSE BY $5.186 B

Gold reserves during the week rose by USD 608 million to USD 48.088 billion *PHOTO: ANI*

Forex reserves at 1-month high of $622.47 B

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

India's foreign exchange reserves rose by USD 5.736 billion to USD 622.469 billion.

It was in the week that ended on 2 February, 2024, hitting a month high, according to the latest data released by Reserve Bank of India.

During the week, India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the biggest component of the forex reserves, rose by USD 5.186 billion to USD 551.331 billion, central bank's weekly statistical data showed.

Gold reserves during the week rose by USD 608 million to USD 48.088 billion.

In the calendar year 2023, RBI added about USD 58 billion to its foreign exchange kitty. In 2022, India's forex kitty slumped by USD 71 billion cumulatively.

Forex reserves or foreign exchange reserves (FX reserves), are assets that are held by a nation's central bank or monetary authority.

It is generally held in reserve currencies, usually US Dollar and, to a lesser degree, Euro, Japanese Yen, and Pound Sterling.

In October 2021, country's foreign exchange reserves touched an all-time high of about USD 645 billion. Much of the decline, though marginal on a cumulative basis, since then can be attributed to a rise in the cost of imported goods in 2022.

Also, the relative fall in forex reserves could be linked to RBI's intervention, from time to time, in the market to defend the uneven depreciation in the rupee against a surging US dollar.

Typically, RBI, from time to time, intervenes in the market through liquidity management, including through the selling of dollars, to prevent a steep depreciation in the rupee.

RBI closely monitors the foreign exchange markets and intervenes only to maintain orderly market conditions by containing excessive volatility in the exchange rate, without reference to any pre-determined target level or band. *—ANI*

The Q3 revenue surged to Rs 14,841cr, an increase compared to Rs 14,339cr in last quarter of the previous fiscal year *PHOTO: BLOOMBERG*

Tata registers record profit, EBITDA in Q3

MUMBAI, 10 FEB

Tata Power, one of India's leading integrated utilities, has announced impressive financial results for the third quarter of the financial year 2023-24 (Q3 FY24).

According to a press release by Tata, the company reported a Profit After Tax (PAT) of Rs 1,076 crore, marking a significant growth trajectory and extending its streak of consecutive quarterly PAT growth to a remarkable 17 quarters.

In a statement released today, Tata Power highlighted the robust performance across its core business segments, including Generation, Transmission and Distribution, and Renewables.

The company's Q3 FY24 revenue surged to Rs 14,841 crore, representing a noteworthy increase compared to Rs 14,339 crore reported in the corresponding quarter of the previous fiscal year. Additionally, Tata Power's Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation, and Amortization (EBITDA) witnessed a substantial YoY growth of 15 per cent , reaching Rs 3,250 crore.For the first nine months of FY24 (9MFY24), Tata Power's revenue reached an all-time high of Rs 45,286 crore, with EBITDA standing at Rs 9,342 crore.

The company's strong financial performance reflects its continued focus on operational excellence and strategic project execution.Notably, the contribution of Tata Power's core businesses to the PAT before exceptional items has increased significantly, accounting for more than 71 per cent of the total in 9MFY24, compared to 40 per cent in the previous fiscal year (FY23).

Tata Power has been actively involved in various initiatives aimed at promoting renewable energy adoption, including the development of 2.8 GW Pumped Hydro Storage Projects with an investment of approximately Rs 13,000 crore. *—ANI*

FILTERING OUT

Insta, Threads to start limiting the recommendation of political content

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

The updated policy applies to areas of Instagram including Explore, Reels and Suggested Users *PHOTO: ANI*

- Instagram users will no longer be bombarded with unwanted political content on their feed. As per Variety, Instagram, in a blog post, said it will not "proactively recommend" political content from accounts that users do not already follow

Instagram users will no longer be bombarded with unwanted political content on their feed.As per Variety, Instagram, in a blog post, said it will not "proactively recommend" political content from accounts that users do not already follow, the Meta-owned company said.

Both apps will add a setting to let users who still want to see political content recommendations opt to do so -- and, according the post, the same control will roll out on Facebook at a later date. Instagram defines "political content" as "potentially related to things like laws, elections or social topics."

"Our goal is to preserve the ability for people to choose to interact with political content, while respecting each person's appetite for it," Instagram head Adam Mosseri wrote in a post on Threads.

The updated policy to discontinue recommending political content applies to areas of Instagram including Explore, Reels, In-Feed Recommendations and Suggested Users.

Meta has already been deprioritising political content across its social apps, including on Facebook. "People have told us they want to see less political content, so we have spent the last few years refining our approach on Facebook to reduce the amount of political content - including from politicians' accounts - you see in Feed, Reels, Watch, Groups You Should Join, and Pages You May Like," the company explained in a post on its Transparency Center site, Variety reported.

The Instagram blog post noted that professional accounts on the app can check the Account Status setting to see if their posts are eligible to be recommended -- based on whether they recently posted "political content." If Instagram has blocked an account's posts from recommendations, pro users may edit or remove recent posts to regain eligibility or request a review if they disagree with Instagram's designation. *—ANI*

Pranavi Urs moves into Top-10 at eighth place

NAIROBI, 10 FEB

Young Indian golfer Pranavi Urs moved into Top-10 with a fine two-under 71 in the third round of the Magical Kenya Ladies Open at Vipingo Ridge here on Saturday. The rookie on the Ladies European Tour, the 20-year-old Pranavi, who came through the Qualifying School, was tied eighth at 2-under 217. She had shot 73-73 in the first two rounds of the 2024 season's first event. Three of the four Indians in the field this week made the cut. Vani Kapoor (73-74-76) was T-31st and Diksha Dagar, who was seventh after the first round, is T-39 with cards of 71-77-76. Singapore rookie Shannon Tan, who last year won the Singapore Ladies Masters, while being an amateur, is in shared lead with rounds of 73-70-67 at 9-under. Sharing the lead is Italy's Alessandra Fanali (70-73-67), who birdied the last hole to join Shannon at the top. *—PTI*

Sumit Nagal sets up title clash against Luca Nardi

CHENNAI, 10 FEB

India's top-ranked tennis player Sumit Nagal overcame the challenge of Dalibor Svrcina, the third seed from Czech Republic, in straight sets to move into the final of the Chennai Open here on Saturday. The second-seeded Nagal defeated the 21-year-old Czech player 6-3, 6-4 in a match that lasted nearly two hours to set up a title clash with top seed Luca Nardi of Italy. The 20-year-old Nardi overcame stiff challenge from unseeded Chinese Taipei player Chun-Hsin Tseng 6-4, 4-6, 7-6 (6) in a marathon three-hour encounter. The 26-year-old Nagal was definitely the better player on the day, serving superbly in the first set and earning a whole lot of points on his second serve. In the second set, Nagal converted both the break points he earned even as his opponent committed a string of unforced errors. *—PTI*

NU FC storm into top 6 with a win over East Bengal

GUWAHATI, 10 FEB

Tomi Juric struck twice as NorthEast United registered a clinical 3-2 win over East Bengal to storm into the top six of the Indian Super League (ISL) table here on Saturday. In the first match of the day's double header, Juric (4th, 66th) and Nestor Albiach (15th) scored for the hosts, while Nandhakumar Sekar (53rd) and Felicio Brown Forbes (82nd) found the back of the net for East Bengal. The home side seemed eager to stamp their authority in the proceedings early on, especially to respond to the 5-0 drubbing they had gone through at the Salt Lake against the Red & Gold Brigade in December. Spanish attacking talisman Nestor Albiach was at the forefront of it, setting up the opening strike by Juric before netting the second one 15 minutes into the match. *—PTI*

Madrid's match against Girona will be 'tough': Ancelotti

MADRID, 10 FEB

Ahead of Real Madrid's upcoming match against Girona on Saturday at Santiago Bernabeu, Los Blancos head coach Carlo Ancelotti said that it will be a tough game. While speaking at the pre-match press conference, Ancelotti said that the game against Girona will be "demanding". He also praised the opponents and said that they have done "better than everyone else" in the league. "It will be a demanding match against a team that has done better than everyone else, including Real Madrid. It's going to be tough, they're doing very well. We have a lot of respect for them. We are confident of winning again after drawing," Ancelotti said as quoted by Real Madrid's official website. *—ANI*

Landmark U19 CWC title clash: Ind, Aus to face-off

INDIA IS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL TEAM IN THE TOURNAMENT

BENONI, 10 FEB

From 2016, India U-19s have played all the finals, winning the 2018 and 2022 editions while losing in 2016 and 2020 **PHOTO: X/BCCI**

Few careers will get wings to soar while some will fade into oblivion but on Sunday, all those sprightly 18 and 19-year-old Indian boys will leave no stone unturned to win a record sixth ICC U-19 World Cup when they face Australia in the summit clash here.

On 19 November last year, an Australian team left Rohit Sharma and his band teary-eyed on a global stage and for the Uday Saharans, Sachin Dhas, Musheer Khans and Saumykumar Pandeys, beating an Aussie team would certainly be very sweet.

"No, we are not thinking about revenge. We are firmly focussed on present and we neither want to dwell on past or look too far ahead," skipper Saharan recently told PTI Bhasha in Benoni. The Aussies have a quartet which could spell trouble for India and they are skipper Hugh Weibgen, opener Harry Dixon, seamers Tom Straker and Callum Vidler, the consistent performers during this edition.

India U-19 had beaten Australia in the 2012 and 2018 finals, and will again start favourites during this edition's title match. The Indian team has always been an age-group powerhouse, thanks to the talent the country produces in hundreds and their ninth global final is a testimony to the system that has been put in place for the last two decades.

From 2016, India U-19s have played all the finals, winning the 2018 and 2022 editions while losing in 2016 and 2020.

Since Virat Kohli's side won the trophy in 2008, U-19 World Cup has gained a lot of traction and the curiosity value does increase due to live TV coverage and streaming.

But cold facts will tell us that the list of those who have failed to make it to the top grade after instant stardom is way bigger. From Reetinder Singh Sodhis and Gaurav Dhimans, back in early 2000s, to Unmukt Chand, Harmeet Singh, Vijay Zol, Sandeep Sharma, Ajitesh Argal, Kamal Passi, Siddharth Kaul, Smit Patel, Ravikant Singh and Kamlesh Nagarkoti, the list goes on. *—PTI*

China axes Arg games amid Messi backlash

BEIJING, 10 FEB

Lionel Messi **PHOTO: X**

Chinese officials have cancelled two Argentina friendlies that were due to take place in the Asian country after Lionel Messi did not play for Inter Miami in a match in Hong Kong.

The world champions were set to face Nigeria in Hangzhou and Ivory Coast in Beijing in March. Fans in China were angered when the Argentina captain did not play for his club against a Hong Kong XI on Sunday.

Messi, 36, said he could not play because of a groin injury. However, his non-appearance drew widespread criticism in China when he then featured off the bench three days later against Vissel Kobe in Japan.

"Beijing does not plan, for the moment, to organise the match in which Lionel Messi was to participate," the Beijing Football Association said on Saturday. When the Hangzhou match was cancelled on Friday their sports bureau said: "Given the reasons that everyone knows, according to the competent authorities, the conditions for the event to take place are not met."

Fans in Hong Kong jeered Inter Miami co-owner David Beckham and chanted for their money back after Messi did not take to the pitch. *—BBC News*

Day 1 of Freestyle Chess: Gukesh beats Carlsen

WANGELS, 10 FEB

D Gukesh **PHOTO: X/**

Grandmaster D Gukesh threw one salvo after another to beat world No 1 Magnus Carlsen of Norway, Levon Aronian of Armenia and eventually reigning world champion Ding Liren of China on the first day of the Weissenhaus Chess Challenge that got underway here.

After a rather sedate start that cost him a full point in the opener against Alireza Firouza of France, Gukesh was in full swing and ended the day with three points in all out of a possible four and is in joint second place in the rapid section behind Vincent Keymer of Germany who notched up 3.5 points.

Nodirbek Abdusattarov also matched Gukesh on points after remaining unbeaten on the opening day while the trio of biggies Carlsen, Firouza and Fabiano Caruana of the United States are in joint fourth spot with two points apiece in the $200,000 prize-money tournament. Levon Aronian of the United States, with a lone draw, is sole seventh while surprisingly Ding Liren is at the bottom after losing all four games.

The rapid format has been designed to pick up the pairings for the knockout stage between the same eight players. Whoever finishes first will play against the person finishing last as is the norm in the knockouts.

For Gukesh, the highlight of the day was his victory over Carlsen. The middle games arising out of chess 960 or freestyle chess are always almost unknown and, showcasing his skills, Gukesh took his chances in a complicated endgame. Carlsen was not able to concentrate at his best as he made a few inaccuracies to let Gukesh come on top and a further error cost the world number one a piece. The rest was child's play.

In the third round, Gukesh was tested by Aronian's Bishop sacrifice as early as on move eight but, ignoring the same, Gukesh went for his counterplay in the centre. Aronian lost a piece eventually and it was all over in just 39 moves. Against Ding Liren, Gukesh was at his technical best as he unleashed a rook sacrifice for a minor piece early and Liren found his position to be crumbling soon afterwards.

In the complications that ensued, Liren was outdone by Gukesh's precise calculation. *—PTI*

Nikhat, Amit among 6 boxers in final at Strandja Memorial

SOFIA, 10 FEB

Amit Panghal **PHOTO: BFI**

Dominant efforts by two-time world champion Nikhat Zareen and Commonwealth Games gold medallist Amit Panghal headlined Indian boxers' march into six finals at the 75th Strandja Memorial Tournament here on Saturday.

Nikhat (50kg) started her bout cautiously against home girl Zlatislava Chukanova, taking some time to get into the rhythm but did not lose hold of the game as she won the round 3-2. Nikhat was clinical in the second round, giving no room to her Bulgarian opponent while delivering some accurate blows.

The Indian continued her domination in the third round as well and she maintained the composure, giving her opponent no chance of a comeback to seal the match with a 5-0 verdict. Nikhat will square off against Uzbekistan's Sabina Bobokulova in the gold medal match on Sunday.

It was an easy day at the office for Panghal (men's 51kg) as he won his third consecutive match with a unanimous 5-0 decision, this time against Turkey's Gumus Samet. Amit used his experience to attack when needed while smartly using his footwork to get away from the punches of his opponent.

The Indian pugilist did not break a sweat as he continued to build on the momentum from the first round to get a comfortable win to enter the final. Amit will take on the reigning world champion Kazakhstan's Sanzhar Tashkenbay on Sunday.

Later, Arundhati Choudhary (66kg) made light work of Jessica Triebelova of Slovakia to secure a 5-0 win. Arundhati will face a tough challenge from reigning World and Asian champion, China's Yang Liu, on Sunday. *—PTI*

FIH PRO LEAGUE

Skipper's brace hands India win over Spain

BHUBANESWAR, 10 FEB

Skipper Harmanpreet Singh slammed a brace as the Indian men's hockey team outplayed Spain 4-1 in a FIH Pro League match here on Saturday. Harmanpreet converted a penalty corner in the seventh minute before scoring from the spot in the 20th minute. Jugraj Singh also converted a penalty corner in the 24th minute while Lalit Kumar Upadhyay scored a field goal in the 50th minute to register the easy win for India.

Spain's lone goal came from a penalty-stroke conversion by Marc Miralles in the 34th minute. Spain started on a positive note, enjoying ball possession in the first five minutes but failed to create any clear-cut chance.

Soon Hardik Singh earned India's first penalty corner and in his 199th match, Harmanpreet scored his 150th penalty-corner goal. It was a perfect penalty corner, strong and low, which beat Spain goalkeeper Luis Calzado all ends up.

The home team was solid in defence in the first quarter as it didn't let Spain hit the target despite enjoying possession. At the start of the second quarter, Spain secured a penalty corner but veteran India custodian PR Sreejesh stuck his left foot out to deny the visitors.

India then secured back-to-back penalty corners and from the second chance, the hosts were awarded a penalty stroke for illegal clearance of the ball. *—PTI*

IND VS ENG TEST; AKASH GETS MAIDEN CALL

Kohli opts out of remainder of series

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

Virat Kohli **PHOTO: PTI**

- Kohli is currently abroad for pressing personal family matter. The series is locked 1-1 with India bouncing back with win

Star batter Virat Kohli has pulled out of the remainder of the Test series against England for personal reasons, the BCCI confirmed on Saturday, ending speculation around premier player's availability for the high-profile contest.

Kohli had missed the first two Tests and that he could be unavailable for the remaining three matches was reported by PTI on 3 February. "Virat Kohli will remain unavailable for selection for the remainder of the series due to personal reasons. The Board fully respects and supports Kohli's decision," the BCCI said in a release.

Kohli is currently abroad for pressing personal family matter. The series is locked 1-1 with India bouncing back with win the second Test in Vizag after the visitors took the series-opener in Hyderabad.

The third match is scheduled to start from February 15 in Rajkot. That Kohli will be unavailable due to serious personal reasons was well-known but BCCI brass wanted to check one final time if it could avail his services for the final Test in Dharamsala from March 7-11.

"The selection committee always knew that Virat won't be available for the series and accordingly the contingency plan was kept ready. Everyone in BCCI wants Virat to fulfil his family commitments and then come back with a free mind as and when he deems fit," a senior BCCI source told PTI on conditions of anonymity. Rahul is fully fit and Jadeja is getting there. The national selection committee included senior players Ravindra Jadeja and KL Rahul in the squad but their inclusion will be subject to clearance by the BCCI's medical team. *—PTI*

COPY ME, LADS!

Erling Haaland scored his first goals since November to help Manchester City move top of the table **PHOTO: X/MAN CITY**

Haland double sinks Everton to send City top

LONDON, 10 FEB

Erling Haaland scored his first goals since November to help Manchester City see off a determined Everton side and move top of the Premier League.

The Norwegian has had to wait to find the net since his return from the foot injury that sidelined him for most of December and January, but he made up for lost time here. His first goal was a brilliant first-time finish that gave his side a crucial breakthrough in the second half, and he made sure of the three points when he ran clear to slot past Jordan Pickford late on.

Until then, Everton's organisation and resilience had frustrated the defending champions, who had not managed a shot on target until Haaland struck with 19 minutes to go.

The visitors failed to clear a corner and the ball fell for Haaland at the back post to smash home a fierce first-time strike that Jordan Pickford got a hand to, but could not keep out.

Haaland was not done there, and made the most of the space Everton left pushing for an equaliser when he galloped on to Kevin de Bruyne's through-ball, held off Jarrad Branthwaite and found the bottom corner of the net. City's time in top spot may be limited - Liverpool can reclaim their place at the summit later on Saturday when they host Burnley at Anfield - but their return to the head of the table for the first time since 24 November is a reward for their impressive form.

Haaland's wait is over

Haaland's opening goal was his first for 419 minutes in the Premier League and ended his longest scoreless run in the competition, as well as his longest streak of unsuccessful shots - 17.

He had missed five league games and 10 in all competitions at the turn of the year while recovering from a stress fracture in his foot, but remained top of the scoring charts even before ending his mini-drought.

In his absence, City faltered at first but, since Christmas, they have begun to find their stride even without Haaland's goals.

If he is back in the sort of form that saw him score 36 league goals last season, they will be even harder to stop.

Calvert-Lewin's drought goes on

Everton boss Sean Dyche was watching from the stands because of a touchline ban and must have been pleased with his side's efforts, despite the end result.

His gameplan worked perfectly for more than an hour but Everton's resistance could not last, and their cause was not helped by their failure to make the most of the few chances they created. *—BBC News*

LIV GOLF LAS VEGAS

Johnson, DeChambeau share lead in 2nd event

LAS VEGAS, 10 FEB

John Rahm **PHOTO: AP**

Dustin Johnson and Bryson DeChambeau each shot 8-under 62 to share the lead at LIV Golf Las Vegas, with fellow major champion Jon Rahm two strokes back with a day left in his second event on the Saudi-funded tour.

In the shadow of the Super Bowl, Johnson and DeChambeau reached 11-under 129 at Las Vegas Country Club on another chilly day with the temperature barely in the 50s. Rahm had a 63 to join Peter Uihlein (65) and Matthew Wolff (66) at 9 under.

Talor Gooch (66) and Jason Kokrak (67) were 8 under. Paul Casey, tied with Harold Varner III for the first-round lead after a 63, had a 70 to drop into a tie for eighth at 7 under with Bubba Watson (68), Cameron Smith (66) and Laurie Canter (64).

In the team competition, Johnson's 4Aces were tied for the lead at 26 under with a RangeGoats team featuring Uihlein, Wolff and Watson. DeChambeau's Crushers were two strokes back in the three-day tournament.

Johnson birdied Nos. 16, 17 and 18 in a bogey-free round. DeChambeau had nine birdies and a bogey. After a bogey on the par-3 12th, he birdied the next three.

Last year, Johnson won LIV Golf Tulsa and DeChambeau topped fields at Greenbrier and Chicago.

Rahm also had a bogey-free round.

The Masters champion tied for third last week in the season-opening event in Mexico, finishing two strokes out of a playoff that Joaquin Niemann won on the fourth hole of a playoff with Sergio Garcia. *—AP*

YASHAVI JAISWAL IS A PROBLEM: VAUGHAN

NEW DELHI, 10 FEB

Former England captain Michael Vaughan said that young Indian opener Yashasvi Jaiswal is a "problem" for the Three Lions and is an unbelievable player. Vaughan was speaking on the Club Prairie Fire Podcast. Jaiswal recently lit up Visakhapatnam with a marathon double century against England in the second Test, helping India in securing a win. "I would say he is a problem for England. He is an issue. He is an unbelievable player. I met him in Mumbai and he got a hundred the next day in the IPL. Now he has gone on to score a double-hundred against the best team in the world," said Vaughan. *—ANI*